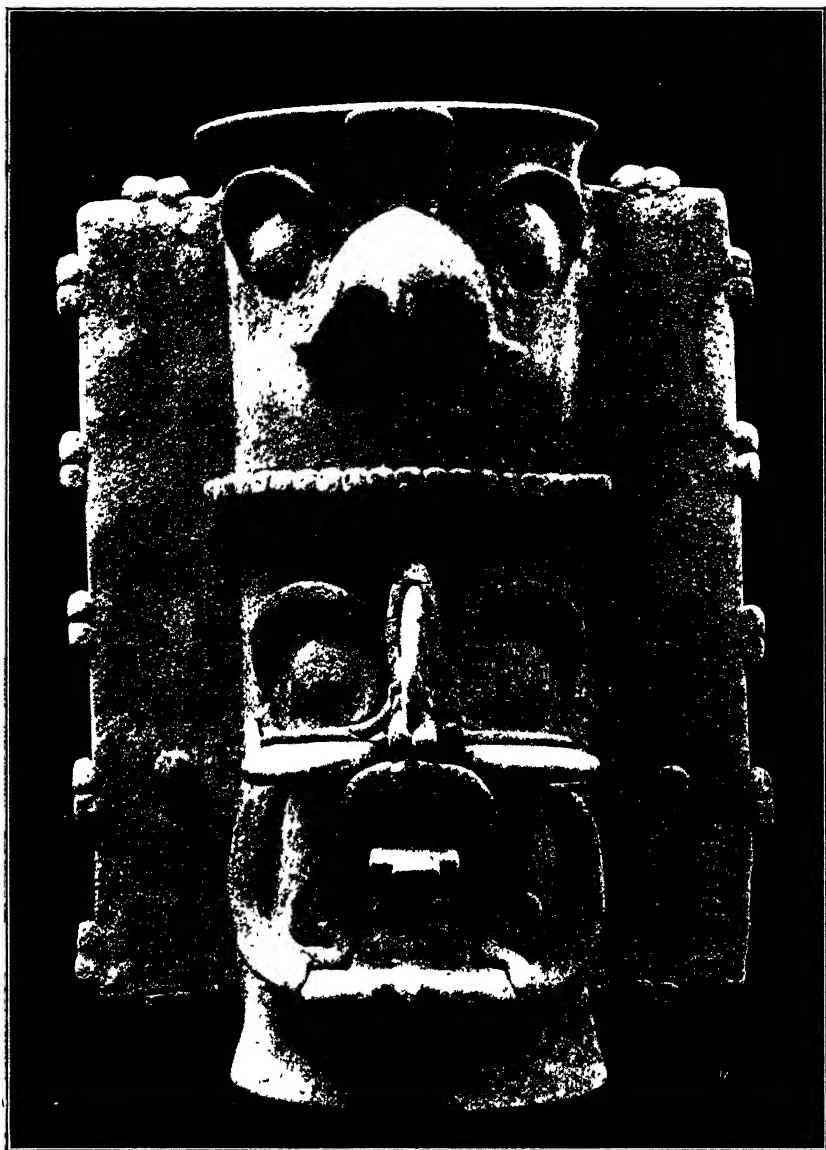


MYSTERY CITIES



INCENSE-BURNER, BELONGING TO NO KNOWN CIVILISATION

MYSTERY CITIES.

Exploration and Adventure in Lubaantun.

BY
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DUCKWORTH

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To

MY MOTHER

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MYSTERY CITIES

CHAPTER I

Belize—Piracy in Caribbean—Trip to Mojo Cay in the *Booksie*—A persistent tiger shark—Prolific waters—An ancient fishing-station—A manatee hunt—Disposal of the carcase of a dead mermaid—Black vultures—Harpooning sting ray—Trip up the Belize River—Negro landed proprietors in the swamps—Negro dogs—An ideal life—A sprat to catch a mackerel—Set out for the interior—Travel by pitpan—"Sicky"—Doctor-flies—The Boom—Endurance of paddlers—Their chants—An Indian's house—Sleep in a washbowl—Paddlers' rations and their methods of cooking—Shooting iguana—Primitive cookery—Beaver Dam—Flood in the river—Curious articles brought down by the flood—Secured by mahogany cutters at risk of their lives—Cost of beer in Flores—Flooded out of hut—Amusements at Beaver Dam—Fishing and shooting—Encounter with a tapir swimming the river—We lasso him, but he escapes—Arrival at Banana Bank.

BELIZE, the capital of British Honduras, is a favourite jumping-off place for expeditions into the unknown and unexplored hinterland of Central America, whether their object be archæological, scientific, or commercial. The interior abounds in ruined cities, temples, and palaces of the ancient inhabitants; unknown species of birds, beasts, and insects; orchids, and other plants; valuable woods, such as sapodillo, mahogany, logwood, and rosewood; gold, silver, opal, and other minerals, sufficient to satisfy the desires of all comers, whether they seek adventure, gain, or merely, like the Athenians, "some new thing." Owing to its geographical situation in the centre of the five little republics of Central America, compared to which the Balkan States are as a flock of turtle-doves, it affords a strategic position to political refugees from Mexico,

Guatemala, Honduras, and Salvador, as here in the shadow of the Great Empire they are safe from reprisals, and can with impunity plot the overthrow of the party in power, and their own return to *La Patria* and the grafts of office. One can always foretell a revolution by the state of the Belize hotels, for when they are unduly crowded it means that the wise ones have got out of the storm-centre while the going was good, and taken refuge in Belize.

The town derives its name from Wallace (pronounced in Spanish "Valis," or Balis), a famous Scottish buccaneer of the seventeenth century, who, with his band, is said to have been the first settler. They built rude bush houses over the mangrove swamp, as the shallow water, with its innumerable cays, bays, and inlets, afforded them protection when pursued by ships of war. It is reputed to be built upon its chief imports and exports, i.e. gin bottles and mahogany logs, an assertion not without foundation in fact, for wherever excavations are made in the town, gin bottles and mahogany logs and chips, used for filling the original swamp, are unearthed in vast quantities, some of them probably dating back to the days of the earliest settlers.

That piracy still survives in the Caribbean the following extraordinary occurrence will show. On the night of June 30th, the schooner *Olimpia*, one of the numerous small sailing-vessels trading between Belize, the Bay Islands, and points along the Central American coast, sailed from Eastern Harbour, Utila, for Coxen Hole, carrying, amongst other freight, 2,000 silver dollars. She had twelve souls on board, including passengers and crew. In the early hours of the morning of July 1st the crew were asleep in the hold, and the passengers in the cabin, the only persons awake being the captain and the sailor keeping the deck watch, both of whom were on deck. They were suddenly startled

by a terrific disturbance which broke out in the hold and cabin—shouts and groans of men, terrified screaming of women, accompanied by a fusillade of revolver shots. They both rushed for the cabin door, but were shot dead in their tracks while descending the stairway. What had happened was this. Before leaving Utila a gigantic negro, named Robert MacField, a resident of the place, had got wind of the presence on board the schooner of the 2,000 silver dollars, and, arming himself with a couple of revolvers and a supply of cartridges, had stowed away when no one was about, during the dusk of the evening, in the forward part of the hold. About two o'clock the next morning he emerged quietly from his hiding-place, and first deliberately shot to death the two sailors sleeping in the hold, then, passing into the cabin through a sliding door which communicated with the hold, he shot three male passengers, none of whom was armed, suddenly awakened from sleep, before they could realise what had occurred. The captain of the vessel, White Buck by name, who had been on deck, was by this time hurrying down the cabin steps, followed by the deck watch, a man named Van Wyck Hyde. Without a moment's hesitation MacField shot the captain in the head, his corpse tumbling down on to the cabin floor, and before the unfortunate Hyde could make his escape back to the deck again, as he endeavoured to do on seeing the captain fall, MacField shot him also in the head, killing him immediately. There now only remained in the cabin with MacField a passenger, Walter Ross (the owner of the money), his wife and baby, his sister, and his sister-in-law, Elsie Morgan (the only ultimate survivor, as will be seen, of the luckless twelve). MacField had spared Ross, as he was the only one who knew where the money was secreted; he and his family were evidently paralysed with fear, and

in no condition to put up any sort of fight for their lives against the murderer. Ross, at MacField's orders, first produced the bags of silver, then scuttled the boat by boring auger holes in her bottom, and finally, assisted by the women, launched the little dug-out which was carried on the deck of the schooner. Into this frail craft descended MacField carrying the coin, Ross, the three women, and the baby. Hardly had they shoved off from the sinking schooner than MacField drew his revolver and deliberately shot Ross, his wife, and sister, shooting repeatedly till all were dead, notwithstanding their heart-rending pleas and prayers for mercy, the women weeping bitterly and grovelling on their knees on the floor of the little dug-out. He next threw the corpses overboard, followed by the baby, whom he did not even take the trouble to kill. On seeing this holocaust, Elsie Morgan jumped overboard, but as she rose to the surface MacField shot at her, wounding her in the arm. (This was evidently his last cartridge.) Realising that she had no chance of making the land by swimming with one arm out of action, she endeavoured to grasp the side of the dug-out, but was savagely battered over the head and shoulders by MacField with the revolver, till she was half unconscious, and had to let go, upon which MacField, evidently believing that she was dead, paddled off towards the shore. Elsie Morgan was by no means dead, however, and possibly, suffering as she was from slight concussion, was less in danger of drowning than she would normally have been ; she was at any rate brought to full consciousness by feeling herself bumping up against a hatch which had floated off as the schooner sank, and, clinging desperately to this frail support, she was borne in on the current to the coast of the island of Ruatan. MacField in the meantime had made his way to Utila in the dug-out.

Next morning a fisherman going to attend his net found the dead body of the baby, and the empty dorey stranded on the shore; he reported the matter, when a search, in which MacField took a prominent part, was at once instituted for the schooner and other members of the crew. Elsie Morgan, on reaching the shore, was so terrified at the idea of encountering MacField that she hid herself in the jungle, where for five days she managed to subsist on such fruit as she could find, till she was discovered by her uncle, while searching near where the dead child and the dorey had been found, in a state of complete exhaustion, and was persuaded to give a detailed account of the whole ghastly occurrence. MacField in the meantime had sold his house in Utila and sailed away to El Porvenir, a village on the mainland.

Elsie Morgan's uncle, on hearing her tale, set out with his Winchester rifle for La Ceiba, which seemed his most likely destination, with the object of killing MacField. Not finding him there, he reported the matter to the authorities, who telegraphed along the coast to have him arrested wherever found. The President of Honduras, making a tour of the Republic, was at that time in El Porvenir, and MacField was promptly arrested by the Presidential Guard, and sent back to Ruatan. There was, unfortunately, a flaw in the evidence as, according to Honduran law, two witnesses are necessary in order to obtain a conviction. The citizens of Ruatan were, however, greatly incensed at this dastardly crime, and themselves executed justice on the criminal by taking him from gaol and promptly hanging him. It may be said that he died an abject coward, begging mercy from his executioners on his knees, weeping, screaming, grovelling, and asserting that he was unfit to die. Nor is this the only crime of the kind which has been committed during recent years, and, curiously enough, in the second case the pirates,

who had robbed a trading schooner and murdered the crew under very similar circumstances, were also brought to justice by the intervention of a woman passenger, meeting the just reward of their deeds upon the gallows in Belize gaol.

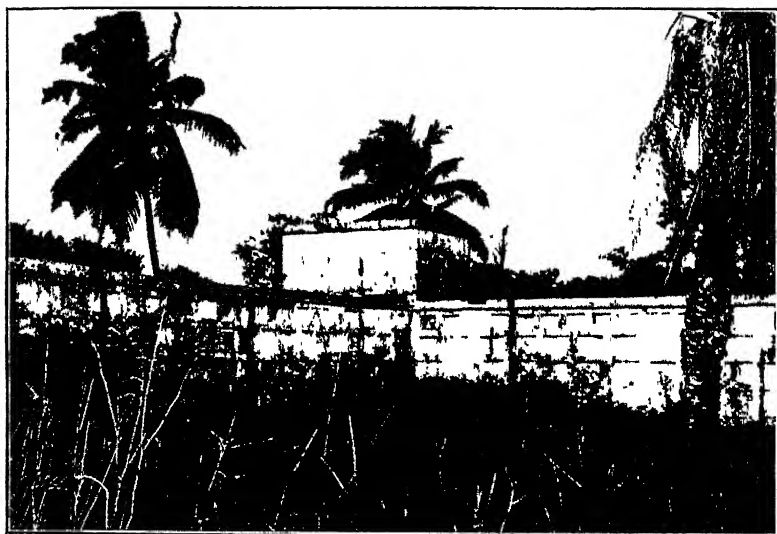
Belize itself is a picturesque little place ; its white-walled, red-roofed ; broad-verandahed houses, standing in spacious grounds filled with palms, fruit-trees, and flowering shrubs, bathed in perpetual sunshine, and cooled by almost constant sea-breezes, render it one of the most delightful spots in Central America. Wide canals, spanned by picturesque bridges and traversed by dug-outs and other small craft, which run the whole length of the town, have given it the title of the " Venice of the Caribbean " by which it is sometimes known.

While in Belize I took my little boat, the *Booksie*, to Mojo Cay, near the mouth of Belize River, a small, flat island consisting chiefly of mangrove swamp, but with a little solid sandy patch towards the north-east end. It was at one time used as a Government quarantine station, but had to be given up, as, owing to the sand-flies and mosquitoes, it is in calm weather an extremely unpleasant place to live in. The sea around it is shallow, and the banks of the mainland all round are flat and covered with dense mangrove swamp ; in fact, a more desolate and inhospitable prospect it would be impossible to imagine ; but these warm, shallow waters are literally swarming with marine life.

One morning I set out from the cay in a small dug-out about 5 a.m., to avoid the swarm of sand-flies which had made their way through the meshes of my mosquito net, and made life a misery with their needle-like stings. I paddled out into the glassy waters of the cay-enclosed bay, which in the dead calm were without a ripple, when suddenly



BELIZE : A CANAL



BELIZE : BURIAL VAULT NO LONGER USED

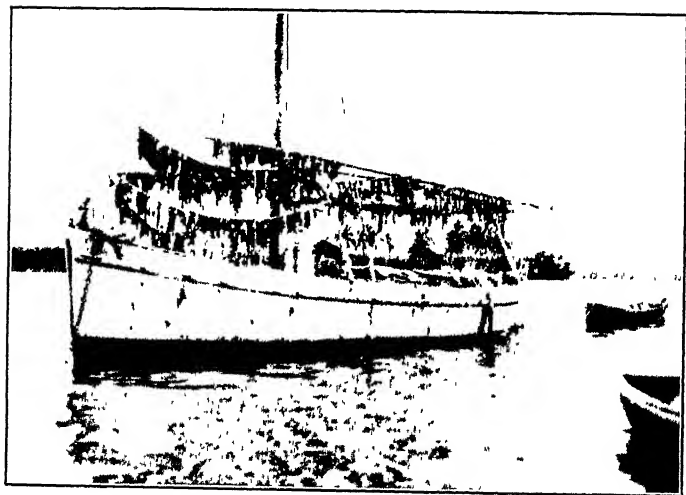
there appeared, not ten yards from the dug-out, the ominous triangular fin of a great tiger shark, making dead for me. I turned the dorey just in time to escape a head-on collision, and I could feel his great body actually slide along the side of the little craft, rocking her dangerously. Turning, I made for the shore, paddling as I never paddled before or since, dreading every moment that the cranky little craft would capsize from a collision with the great fish, which evidently realised that she contained a potential breakfast, but fortunately had not got sufficient brain-power to work out the problem of getting at it, for he followed, within a few yards, right up to the wharf, and only turned out to sea again when I had landed. This stretch of water is a regular hunting-ground for sharks of all sizes, attracted, no doubt, by the shoals of mullet and other small fish with which it swarms. Mojo Cay itself was evidently used by the ancient Maya as a fishing-station, to which they resorted in order to capture manatee, or sea cows (the mermaid of the ancient mariners), and to fish, as innumerable flint spear-heads have been found here, with thousands of circular pottery rings, probably used as net sinkers. Many tons of manatee bones have been washed out from the northern end of the cay, where they had been dumped by the ancient inhabitants, who doubtless struck these great, unwieldy mammals with flint-headed lances. I witnessed the death of one of them, nine feet long, and weighing many hundred pounds, which was harpooned from a small dorey by a couple of San Pedro fishermen. He looked very like an immense seal, with a great, flat tail, tiny eyes so sunk in flesh as to be almost invisible, a tremendously tough, elastic skin, fully one inch thick, and a head very like a cow's, with stiff bristles all round the mouth. These animals are usually very shy, and will not allow a dug-out,

no matter how silently paddled, to approach within harpooning distance, but this one appeared to be asleep on the surface of the water, as he allowed the two paddlers to sneak up within striking distance, when the man standing in the bow launched his harpoon, and rudely awoke the sleeping monster with three inches of barbed steel in the back of his neck. He made off at a tremendous pace at first, towing the dorey behind him like a cork, but very rapidly tired, and soon could not even make way against the two paddlers, who towed him in to the cay shore, where they drove a large wooden peg into each of his nostrils, and he rapidly died of suffocation. It seemed a cruel procedure, but they told me that this was really the most merciful method of slaughtering these great animals, whose hide is so thick and bones so large and solid that it would take much longer to reach a vital organ with cold steel. The unfortunate animal offered no resistance whatever on being speared, or afterwards when towed ashore, though had he used his immense bulk effectively he could easily have upset the little dug-out and her occupants into the water, when the sharks would soon have accomplished the rest. Manatee feed on the long green grass on the shallow bottoms close to the bars of rivers, and apparently have no effective weapons whatever beyond their extreme shyness, which protects them from their human enemies, and their immense bulk and armour-like skin as a protection against the very few fish which might consider the possibility of attacking them.

Skinning the carcase was a tremendous labour, and took three men more than a couple of hours, the perspiration pouring off their bodies under the broiling sun, in a temperature well over 100 degrees, but the hide is very valuable, as it furnishes leather unsurpassed for boot-soles, upon



"MERMAID" ABOUT TO BE SKINNED



MANATEE MEAT HUNG OUT TO DRY

which time and use seem to have no effect. The next procedure was to cut the meat off in great chunks from the bones, and finally to divide these into strips, which are crimped and salted, and find a ready sale amongst the cay fishermen along the coast. The meat looks beautiful, being very fine grained and pale pink in colour, but it is deceptive, as it tastes like exceptionally tough horse-meat. The liver is about the same size as a cow's, and is considered a great delicacy. I tried a piece, fried fresh on board the fishermen's little sloop, but I cannot say that it appealed to me. It took nearly seven hours to deal with the carcase, and it was not till three in the afternoon that the fishermen abandoned it on the shore.

All this time countless John Crows, the horrible black vulture of Central America, had been collecting. The earlier arrivals perched on the surrounding mangrove and cocoanut-trees, till not even standing-room was left, and they overflowed on to the beach, getting ever bolder and bolder, till they ventured at last within a few yards of the fishermen. As soon as the carcase and head had been abandoned they swooped down on both, tearing and rending the flesh, and fighting each other fiercely with wings and beaks for each scrap of meat, till both head and body were quite invisible beneath a great mass of flapping black wings, snapping beaks, and ugly, bald, snake-like necks. I tried to get the launch up close enough for a good photograph, but most of them made off, though some of the boldest actually let me get within six feet before taking wing. They did not go far, however, and hardly had the launch turned than they were back again at the feast.

The sea around the cay swarms with sting ray, though they do not attain a very large size. We struck several of these, which afford an easy mark for the amateur

harpooner, as they keep quiet on the bottom, where they are easily visible, and present such an immense breadth of body that it is easy to strike them, and does not require the lightning quickness and judgment necessary to hit a large fish of the usual torpedo shape, which usually has to be struck after it has taken fright, and is moving off like a streak of lightning. These large fish are, however, merely side-lines in the fisherman's everyday business of seining mullet, which they split open, dry in the sun, and sell for 40c. per dozen, the sun-dried roes fetching the same price. In one cast they got 110 dozen, and in a second 85 dozen mullet, which will give some indication of the enormous number of fish in these waters during the season, and account for the presence of the hosts of sharks and other large fish which prey upon them.

On leaving Mojo Cay I took the *Booksie* for a short trip up the Belize River, where a few clearings have been made by small negro proprietors in the mangrove swamp, in which they have established little settlements, put up tiny shacks made of all sorts of curious material—pieces of packing-cases, straightened-out kerosene tins, reeds, sticks, etc. These quarter-acre settlements, hardly won from the surrounding swamp, usually have imposing names, as "Montgomeryville," "Detroit Farm," etc. They raise maize, okra, a few plantains, egg plant, and sweet potatoes, while nearly all of them have gay little flower gardens, gorgeous with bougainvillea, flor de mai, frangipanni, and crotons. Hardly one of them but has a pack of mangy, half-starved, savage dogs, and woe betide the stranger who attempts to approach the home in the owner's absence. Why the negro keeps such an enormous number of dogs is always a puzzle to me. As a rule they are no good for hunting purposes; they must, even with the most meagre

rations, cost something to keep; they are useless as watch-dogs, because the shack contains nothing worth stealing; and between dog and owner no affection or regard seems to be wasted on either side. Some of these riparian landlords do a considerable amount of fishing, and Aunt Chloe, who sold us a dozen eggs, was a famous fisherwoman. She was fishing for "poopsies," a small river fish, with a tiny piece of pork as a bait. The poopsies, when captured, are used as bait, and she told us she caught tarpon, black snapper, and cobarli, and showed us a nice little tarpon two feet long, the result of her morning's work. With fish, chickens, eggs, and vegetables all produced on the "farm," the old lady had few needs beyond a few yards of cotton for clothes, and some "black strap" for the clay pipe which was her constant companion.

Farther up the river we passed a rotten old dug-out with about half an inch of freeboard, paddled by a very ancient negro lady seated in the stern, most of whose time was occupied in the thankless job of trying to bale her out with an old milk-tin. In the bow stood a half-grown negro boy, graceful as a deer, with a long, thin cane harpoon poised in his hand. Every now and then they paused beside the mangrove roots, and when his quick eye had detected one of the little mud-coloured fish he was after, the harpoon shot downwards, the wriggling victim, impaled on the fine, steel-barbed point, was hauled in, and deposited in the water at the bottom of the dug-out.

Fishing is the principal occupation and amusement of the coastal people of the colony, and Caribs, Mayas, negroes, and half-castes are equally proficient at the sport with seine, cast net, line, or harpoon.

From Belize we set out on June 28th for Cayo, the frontier station between the colony and the Republic of

Guatemala, this being my first trip into the interior. The first part of our journey, up the Mopan River to Banana Bank, had to be done by pitpan, and from thence on horseback to Cayo. These pitpans are curious craft, in which a great deal of the river-travel throughout Central and South America is done. Ours was dug out from a single immense cedar-tree, measuring 35ft. in length and 5ft. 6in. beam. Bow and stern were square, and clear of the water for the last two or three feet of their length. In the centre a small tarpaulin-covered space gave very scant accommodation for the passengers; the bow was occupied by the four paddlers, and the stern by the steersman, armed with a paddle six feet long, which served both as propeller and rudder. Shortly after 6 a.m. all the crew had turned up at the wharf, with the exception of an old negro known as "Sicky," a notorious character in Belize, who had unfortunately been run-in the previous night for being drunk and disorderly, and it was not till he had been brought before the magistrate, and I had paid his fine, that we could make a start. On leaving the court-house, he formed the centre of a triumphal procession down to the wharf, clad in a lady's pink silk blouse, holding two green parasols over his head, loudly chanting his opinion of the law in general and its representative with whom he had recently had an interview in particular, and accompanied by half the little nigger-boys in the town, yelling and shouting for all they were worth.

Passing through the lower reaches of the river, the banks were covered with dense mangrove swamp, whose branches and aerial roots arched above us, forming a stifling, airless tunnel which hemmed us in on every side, and shut out the sun and breeze, while the combined smell of mud, decaying vegetation, and alligators filled our nostrils. I



NEGOTIATING FALLS



PITPAN, OR DUG-OUT

was bitten on the hands and face by the doctor-flies which swarm here. These miserable insects, about the size of an ordinary house-fly, are of a vivid green and yellow colour. The bite is not particularly painful at first, but in ten or fifteen minutes swells rapidly, and for hours afterwards itches intolerably. By the time we had passed through the mangrove belt my fingers were so swollen I could hardly bend them, my eyes were almost closed, and my nose a shapeless, itching lump twice its natural size. That evening we put in at The Boom, a small settlement on the bank, so called because it is said that in the old days a great chain stretched across the river at this point to intercept the mahogany logs floated down the river from camps in the interior. The place was literally swarming with mosquitoes, which after sundown attacked us in battalions. I could not sleep, and from the sounds of subdued swearing, punctuated by vigorous slaps on bare hide, it was obvious that no one else could either. I therefore determined to make an early start, so, after a cup of coffee and a biscuit, we pushed off about 2 a.m., into a raw, damp fog, which hung like a pall over the river. The way the men paddled throughout the whole day was simply amazing—hour after hour under the blazing sun, without halt or rest, every now and then dipping their heads, hands, or paddle-handles into the stream, and going on without the least sign of fatigue. During most of the day they kept up a sort of low, droning, improvised song, or chant, describing incidents of their work, their amusements in Belize, very highly-seasoned amorous adventures, and—most popular of all—graphic accounts of the peculiarities and peccadilloes of the principal white citizen of the colony. When one performer had finished, another would take up the song, till each had had his turn, all joining in a sort of chorus at frequent intervals. Whenever

we came to a stretch of river where the current was particularly swift the chorus increased in volume, and quickened in time to keep pace with the more rapid strokes of the paddles. About 5 p.m. we reached a little clearing called Indian Camp, and, as it was raining heavily, determined to stop for the night. The only house in the place was a small one-roomed affair built of bamboo, with considerable intervals between the sticks for ventilation, which also freely admitted the rain. The owner, an old Indian of seventy-five, with his six children, the youngest only five, all lived in this single room. Each in turn before tumbling into their hammocks (three children to one hammock), came and knelt at their father's knees, and said their "Aves" or "Paters." The old man was not averse to a little whisky, after two or three glasses of which he became quite lively, sang us several Indian songs, and showed us how they danced the "*mestisada*" when he was young. There was no room to swing my hammock, but my host provided me with a huge mahogany washing-bowl 5ft. long by 3ft. across, which at least had the merit of being clean, and, curling myself up in this, with my sheet wrapped round me from head to foot to keep off mosquitoes, and my hammock as a mattress, I soon fell asleep.

Next morning we made another early start, bidding adieu to our host, who was not in the best of tempers, and evidently rather upset by his dissipation of the previous night. About eight o'clock we pulled in to the bank to allow the men to cook their food. Each man is allowed four pounds of salt pork and seven quarts of flour weekly as a ration. The cooking is simple in the extreme. A large fire of dry sticks is made, over which is hung the common cooking-pot, and into this is dropped each man's piece of pork (with a string attached, hanging over the side, by which it may be identified,

higher up the bank, and beyond the reach of even a top-gallant flood, but the change to this poky little place, with mud floor, leaky palm-leaf roof, and bed made of round sticks arranged in rows on a wooden framework, was decidedly one for the worse. We were kept in all five days at Beaver Dam, and amused ourselves by fishing and shooting. The only fish we caught were vaca, a species of cat-fish, which were quite plentiful and not bad eating, though the flesh of some of them was full of small white worms. We shot two deer, two peccari, or wild hog, and four gibnut, a large rodent closely resembling a guinea-pig, but rather larger than an English hare. We also brought down a dozen parrots and quite a few pigeons as they flew over, but a good many of these fell in the high bush and in the river, whence it was impossible to retrieve them. The deer and peccari were driven across the bush track by a pack of half-starved mongrel curs, which had been trained to range ahead, accompanied by their owners, and drive the game across the track as near to the sportsmen as possible. The burrows of the gibnut were discovered by these same curs, and the animals smoked out with a smudge of damp leaves and some pepper-bushes, and shot as they bolted from their holes, very much as one shoots rabbits when ferreting. With the exception of the parrots and pigeons, both fishing and shooting provided but poor sport. Fresh fish and meat, however, were a welcome change from a straight diet of salt horse, from which we had been suffering for over a week, though the old parrots proved so tough that even the labourers could make nothing of them.

On the fifth morning, the river having gone down considerably, we made a fresh start at 7 a.m. ; the current, however, was still running very strong, and the men frequently took to the poles, as they could make no headway

against the stream over shallow runs, but, even with poles, one watching the bank would wonder for seconds at a time whether the old dug-out was making any way against the current, or only just holding her own. Once, going over a specially swift run, the water caught her bow, switched it round, and turned her, completely out of control, broadside on to the current. She canted sideways, shipping enough water to fill her nearly to the thwarts; then, just as I was preparing for a swim to the bank, the men succeeded in grounding their poles and got control of her again, with no worse misfortune than the saturation of everything on board. Going round a bend in the river where the water was comparatively smooth, we almost ran into a tapir swimming the river, and about one-third of the way over. He was a young animal not much bigger than a large mastiff, and evidently very much flurried by our sudden arrival on the scene, as he first tried to turn back, but the pitpan headed him off from the near bank, the men making an awful din by beating the water with their paddles and shouting at the top of their voices. He then started for the far bank, followed closely by the pitpan, which soon overtook him. I was very anxious to get a live tapir for the Zoo, so shouted to the bow paddleman to try and lasso him instead of killing him with a machete, as he was about to do. With some considerable difficulty he succeeded in slipping a loop of rope over the animal's head, and, paddling upstream, we began to tow him astern; but the poor little beggar was making very heavy weather of it, for, as he could not swim as quickly as we paddled, he was being towed under and half strangled, half drowned. On approaching the bank I stopped the boat, slacking the tow-rope with a view to getting him on board and carrying him there trussed up. Finding himself in shallow water, he soon found his feet,

stood up, and, giving his head a sideways twist, slipped out of the noose in the most marvellous manner, and, before I could even put a cartridge in my gun, was up the steep clay bank and off into the bush. I rather sympathised with him, as, though a mere baby, he had put up such a gallant fight, but the men were very sore that so much good tapir meat on the hoof should thus easily have escaped them.

That evening we arrived at Banana Bank, where I spent a couple of pleasant days, and on the third morning set out on horseback with a guide—a taciturn Spanish Indian—for Cayo.

CHAPTER II

Park-like scenery—A narrow escape—Miserable Indians—Disgusting hammocks—A village of criminals—Earth-eating children—Prevalence of hookworm—A dangerous night-ride—Lost in the bush—A miserable plight—Protection against mosquitoes—Adventure with a snake—Horses' instinct superior to human intelligence—Arrival at Cayo—Doctor's visit welcome—Native fees—A curious superstition—A cure for immortality—A post-mortem feast—Cowardliness of Central American tiger and lion—Story of Marcelino Velasquez—His battle with a jaguar.

ON fording the river, we crossed a stretch of beautiful open grass country with magnificent wild cotton and Santa Maria trees dotted everywhere, which might well have passed for an English park had it not been for the tall, stately cuhoon and royal palms which were plentifully scattered over it. Crossing this, we entered an old mahogany truck pass, where, owing to the sticks, which had been laid down transversely to form a corduroy road for the heavy trucks to pass over, having rotted from years of exposure, the going was very bad and full of holes ; bush also had grown from the sides and filled the pass, so that in places it was very difficult to find the way. Coming to a place where a great frond from a cuhoon palm had fallen across the track, just too low to ride under, I stretched out my arm to lift it up, when, with a sharp "*Cuidado, señor,*" the guide brushed alongside me, and sliced the frond in two with one blow of his machete, severing at the same time a small, yellow-jawed tamagass—one of the most poisonous snakes in the colony—which had been lying stretched out along the leaf,

the two wriggling halves falling on each side of the trail. He had seen some movement on top of the frond, and knowing the danger of handling such things, which are favourite places for snakes to take a siesta upon, had intervened just in time.

About 4 p.m. we arrived at the good-sized, but forlorn and dismal Indian village of San Francisco. The huts were wretched, tumble-down affairs, consisting of a few upright sticks roofed over with rotting palm-leaf, wind and rain finding their way freely through both walls and roofs. Even the women were dirty and bedraggled, a most unusual thing with Maya women, who are generally spotless. The wretched, pot-bellied children were making languid efforts to play in the dust, but scuttled off like rabbits into the bush at our approach. The few men who were lounging about did the same, and the women made a bee-line for their huts. We rode up to the largest and least miserable-looking hut, and there found the *Alcalde*, or chief man of the village, suffering from a severe attack of malarial fever. He told us there was no food of any kind to be had in the place, and the utmost he could offer us in the way of hospitality was a hammock each for the night. I saw the guide examining the hammocks carefully.

"What are you looking for, *hombre*?" I said.

"Come over and look for yourself, señor," he answered.

I did so, and found that the loops, to which the suspending ropes were attached on both hammocks, were literally seething, crawling masses of brown bugs and their ova. These loathsome insects retire to this part of the hammock during the day, but at night come down in battalions to attack the luckless would-be sleeper. The sky was overcast, and we were evidently going to have rain, but I determined to push on, as even a night in the bush would be

preferable to one at San Francisco. The guide told me that this was the worst village in the district ; half the men were wanted by the police of the colony and the neighbouring republics ; not one of the couples living together in it was married, and whenever the people could club together sufficient money, it was expended in purchasing demijohns of native rum for a debauch in which both sexes joined, and which usually ended in a free fight. Several murders had been committed there, but the perpetrators had never been brought to justice. From their pot bellies, earthy colour, and lack of energy, I could tell that most of the children were earth-eaters. I caught one wretched little naked girl of about eight in the act of scraping up some reddish earth from the side of the house, where the parasite-infested pigs wallowed during the night. She was either too weak or too indifferent to all mundane affairs to run away. I asked her how much she ate in a day, and she answered, with a ghost of a grin, by putting her two dirty little claw-like hands together and scooping up a small double fistful, to show me that that was about her daily allowance. I tried a fragment of this earth myself, and found it of a sweetish and not unpleasant taste ; the danger to the children, however, lies in the fact that it is full of the ova of numerous parasites, from the pigs' and other animals' droppings, including hookworm, from which fully eighty per cent. of the Indians suffer.

Shortly after leaving San Francisco we passed a cluster of mahogany-cutters' huts known as Mount Hope, which we knew to be just twenty miles from Cayo. A couple of miles beyond this, the rain, which had been long threatening, came down in torrents, and the night rapidly closed in. So dark did it soon become that I unloosed my picket-rope, and the guide and I each took hold of it so that we should

not lose each other, which, in the pitch-dark bush, with the pouring rain, it would have been quite easy to do. Riding was most uncomfortable, not to say dangerous, as the overhanging branches, which are difficult to avoid in the daytime, kept scratching our faces, and a "wait a bit" thorn caught me just over the eyelid, tearing a gash in my forehead from which I could feel the blood trickling down into my eye. Fortunately it was not half an inch lower, as in that case I should probably have lost the eye. After what seemed hours of riding, we came to the conclusion that we must have lost our way, as we had encountered nothing like the creek at which we knew we should have arrived about two hours after leaving Mount Hope. I determined to call a halt till dawn, for we stood a good chance of either losing our way entirely in the bush, falling over the steep bank into the creek, or getting blinded or stunned by some overhanging branch. As a last forlorn hope we gave the horses their heads to see if they would make for home, but, instead of doing so, they turned right round in their tracks and headed in the opposite direction. We dismounted—as miserable a couple as it would be possible to find, for we had no grub, and had had nothing to eat since breakfast—tethered the horses, off-saddled, and, wrapping ourselves up in the blankets which are always used as *numnahs*, with our saddles as pillows, lay down in the pouring rain to try and get a little sleep before dawn. One would have thought that the downpour of rain would have kept off the mosquitoes, but, far from doing so, it only appeared to make them more bloodthirsty. At last they became unbearable, so, pulling my saddlebags to me, I managed, after a lot of fumbling in the dark, to unearth three dirty handkerchiefs, one of which I tied round each hand and one round my face, and, lying down again, having

beaten the mosquitoes, I went off into an uneasy doze. I seemed to have been asleep only a few minutes when I was suddenly awakened by something coming down "flop" into my lap from the tree above; partly freeing my right hand from its handkerchief, I stretched it out to discover what had disturbed me, when to my horror I encountered the clammy coils of a small snake. Fully awake in an instant, I jumped up and ran till I was brought up by the bush; no doubt it was only a harmless tree-snake, which, having, if a snake can be said to do so, missed his footing up aloft, and been half stunned by the fall, was probably more scared than I; I have, however, always had a particular loathing for snakes of all sorts and sizes, and this one, falling as it were from the heavens, I must admit, scared me considerably. I did not lie down again, but, fagged as I was, paced up and down the track till the first faint streaks of dawn began to make their appearance through the bush. As soon as it was light we discovered that we were on the trail from Mount Hope to Cayo, but had turned around (no doubt at one of the so-called "cut offs," which Indians make round large trees fallen across the track, sooner than take the trouble to cut through the tree-trunk) and were actually retracing our steps towards Mount Hope. The horses had been right after all in wanting to turn when given their heads, and their instinct had been more reliable than our reason.

Soon after dawn the rain held up, and, the sun warming our miserable chilled bodies, we set out in better spirits and reached Cayo shortly after noon. On each side of the river a smooth, park-like savanna, dotted over with giant shade trees, sloped up from the banks to a height of from 50 to 100 feet. The houses, forming a belt, surrounded this park-like amphitheatre, through the centre of which wound

the river, clear and limpid, with clean, shingly bottom. Women, naked to the waist, clad in gaily coloured print petticoats, were washing clothes, or rather pounding them with wooden clubs on the rocks by the side of the river, chattering and laughing amongst themselves like a flock of parrots. On seeing two *caballeros* at the ford, those whose garments were deficient below as well as above the waist hastened to hide their nakedness under water, with an assumption of modesty to which their impudent, laughing glances gave the lie.

Though we had had no food since the previous morning, and our clothes were torn to ribbons, our faces and legs covered with scratches and wounds, we neither of us were really any the worse for the experience, which, when it was over, I was glad to have gone through, as it gave me some faint idea of what the life of a mahogany-cutter living in the bush is like.

Cayo is a good-sized village, with an extraordinarily mixed population, consisting of Guatemalans, Mexicans, Honduraneans, negroes, and Maya Indians, with a few French, Americans, and English. It is the last outpost of civilisation, and portal to the impenetrable and unexplored jungle beyond, which stretches north to Mexico, south to Guatemala, and east and west from the Atlantic to the Pacific. All the way up the river I had found patients awaiting the coming of an English medico; though bush-doctors, snake-doctors, obeah-men, shamans, and all kinds of quacks are plentiful as blackberries in autumn, the arrival of a genuine doctor is a rare occurrence. Fees varied a good deal with the commercial rating of the patient, ranging from a few sweet potatoes or corn cakes (the East-End surgery fee), through a dozen eggs or a brace of parrots or pigeons (perhaps about the average general practitioner's

remuneration), up to a sucking pig, a gibbon, or a couple of hens (the Harley Street consultant's fee). One of the first patients I was asked to see in Cayo was a well-known character, old David Arland, an ancient African, who as a child had been captured with his parents by slavers on the West African coast, and liberated by a British ship of war. He had come to British Honduras as a plantation hand, and drifted to Cayo, where, in the combined professions of pit-pan steersman, cattle doctor, and obeah-man he had acquired a good bush house, and a considerable amount of money and live stock. For a long time he had been suffering agonies from an internal tumour which had got quite beyond the possibility of operation, and, though he could eat nothing, still clung on to life. When I got to the house he called me into the bedroom, and, having first turned his family out, showed me his left hand, between the middle and ring fingers of which a small, hard lump was to be felt. This, he explained, was a piece of charmed metal, which when he was a boy in Africa, had been grafted into the flesh by a celebrated obeah-man. It was guaranteed to bring constant good luck and prolong life indefinitely. The good luck he admitted had been his, but now, affected as he was by a painful and incurable disease, he was (much as he wished it) unable to die and end his sufferings, owing to the presence of the charm. Would I remove it, and so let him pass in peace? This I accordingly did, and found it to consist of an oblong piece of some rather soft metal, greyish outside, silvery within, $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch broad, and $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick. He seemed greatly relieved after the little operation, and, curiously enough, that same evening passed peacefully away. On visiting the house next day, I found his bed neatly made, and, laid out on a small table by the side of it, a substantial meal of pork, plantains, beans, sweet

potato, and corn cake, all smoking hot. On seeking an explanation, his wife told me he had left all his property to her, on the sole condition that for one month after his death she should twice a day prepare a good hot meal, and lay it beside his bed, as he meant to return in the spirit and regale himself on the smell of the food ; which condition she faithfully carried out, and his spirit must have enjoyed a series of repasts far superior to anything he had ever enjoyed in the flesh for such a long period.

It is a generally accepted tradition throughout Central America that neither the puma (or American lion) nor the jaguar (or American tiger) will attack a grown man, unless cornered and forced to fight for their lives. Either of these animals will go off with an Indian baby wandering on the outskirts of the village, just as they will steal an occasional pig which ventures into the bush beyond the safety zone ; and, as every traveller in the Central American bush has experienced for himself, they will stealthily follow the lonely wayfarer on foot or horseback for mile after mile and hour after hour, paralleling his track in the bush, rarely heard, and hardly ever seen, till he comes to some village or settlement, when they abandon the chase. This patient, persistent dogging of his footsteps by an animal, which is apparently trying to screw up courage for an attack, is to the new-comer an extremely eerie and nerve-racking sensation, especially if he is unarmed, and his horse or mule shows the usual signs of terror exhibited by these animals on the near approach of any of the great cats. The old-timer, however, jogs serenely on his way in the sure conviction that his trailer will never get up sufficient courage to come out into the open. That this conviction is not always justified, however, the following tale will show. After spending a few days recuperating in Cayo, hearing that

there were a number of burial mounds of the ancient Maya there, I rode down to the little sugar plantation of Platon, on the Mopan River close to the Guatemala frontier. The "patron," Marcelino Velasquez, was a large, powerful Sureño, or cross between a negro and a Spaniard, from one of the southern republics. He was a pleasant companion and hospitable host, but his appearance was sinister, not to say terrifying, as the left side of his swarthy face was traversed by four terrible purple scars, extending from the temple to the back of the neck, which dragged the left corner of his mouth up into a perpetual sardonic grin, while his left eye was represented by an ugly red hole. As we lay in our hammocks, talking and smoking corn-husk cigarettes after supper, I could contain my curiosity no longer and suddenly remarked :

" Marcelino, I have heard that you have been mixed up with every revolution in the five republics during the last twenty years, but I never saw the weapon, even in Latin America, that could tear the side of a man's face out as yours has been torn."

" Señor," he replied, " I have fought many times, always on the side of Liberty, which these Cabrones do not value ; wherefore I am now a poor man, but the scars you see I got in an encounter with no human enemy."

" *Amigo*," I said, " there still remain several drinks in my flask, cigarettes require only to be rolled ; the hour is early, and I am not sleepy, tell me, I beg you, how it happened."

Whereupon he told me the following story, which I give, translated from Spanish, as nearly as possible in his own words.

" When I first went to Spanish Honduras I was a refugee

from Guatemala, where I had been implicated in the last revolution, unfortunately on the losing side. Finding the country too hot for me, I was glad to escape as a sailor before the mast in a little coasting fruit schooner, first to the Island of Ruatan and finally to the mainland. I was fortunate enough to obtain the managership of a small sugar estate in the south of the republic, and, as I was drawing a pretty fair salary, I sent for my wife and children, who were at San Pedro, to come and join me. The quarters at the rancho were quite unfit for a lady, so I hired a house for my family at the nearest settlement, about ten miles distant, riding over to see them every Saturday after work was over, and returning early on Monday morning. One Saturday evening, after paying the hands as usual, I went to the stable to saddle up my old pony Muchacho, when what was my disgust to find him as lame as a duck, his off forefoot big as a bladder, and so painful he could hardly put it to the ground. Calling Miguel, the old cattle and horse doctor, and general handy man about the estate, I told him to poultice the foot, and find out in the morning whether the swelling were due to a thorn or the bite of a tarantula, and in the latter case to shoot the old pony, as the hoof was bound to come off, though I should be sorry to lose him. Not another animal was available, unless I rode one of the steers, but as I knew that if I did not turn up that evening my wife would be in a terrible state, imagining that all sorts of things had happened to me in this unsettled little republic, I decided, as the road was good, being the height of the dry season, and the moon rose early, to walk over, and trust in luck to be able to hire a horse in the village for my return journey on Monday. To carry my heavy saddlebags all that long hot tramp through the bush was out of the question, so, shoving a change of clothes and a suit of

pyjamas in a shot-bag slung over my shoulders, and buckling on my machete, or cutlass, without which no bushman travels in Central America, I set out about 8 p.m. It was a glorious moonlight night and, except in the high bush, almost as light as day. All went well till I got to the botan bridge over a small creek, which was reckoned to be half way between the ranch and the village ; here, being thirsty, for the night was close and hot for walking, I lay on my stomach and, reaching over the high bank of the stream, filled the top of my flask with water, added a little rum, drank it, and repeated the operation. As I was scrambling to my feet again I thought I heard a slight rustling in the bush just in front of me, but took no particular notice of it, as some animal is always prowling around the drinking place, night or day. I noticed, however, on starting again, that the rustling kept pace with me and never stopped. It was on the left hand, not very loud, and sounded only just inside the bush. Whenever I stopped for a minute to listen, the rustling stopped too, so that at last it began to get on my nerves, and, seizing an occasion when it seemed to be particularly near the road, I made a sudden dash at the point from which it appeared to come and peered into the bush as far as I could see in the bright moonlight, but nothing was visible, the bush was silent and still as the grave, and the only sound I could hear was the beating of my own heart. At last I arrived at a piece of cuhoon ridge about a mile and a half from the village, which only a few weeks before had been burnt down ; this extended for a couple of hundred yards on each side of the road, and, except for the gaunt dead stems of the palms, was as open as savanna, so I thought that whatever was tracking me would be bound to come out in the open here. No sooner had I entered the cleared space left by the fire than the rustling ceased entirely,

and, reaching the centre of the patch, I took a good look all round, but could see nothing, and, considerably reassured, I tramped on. I don't suppose I had gone a hundred yards into the bush on the opposite side of the clearing when the rustling started again, apparently quite close up to me in the bush, whereupon, getting a bit rattled, I made a bolt of it, and ran as fast as I could go for perhaps a quarter of a mile, till I was quite pumped out. I stopped for a minute to recover my wind; the noise had stopped too; but as soon as I started walking, there it was again! I made up my mind to think no more of it, and pegged doggedly on, whistling to keep my spirits up, though I must admit it was not a very successful effort, as my mouth was dry as a limekiln. Soon I knew by the appearance of the bush that I was approaching the turn to the village, a narrow bridle-path, which, branching sharply off the main track at right angles for half a mile, led to the first few scattered huts on its outskirts. Within about 300 yards of the turn the rustling suddenly became much louder, sounding like some large animal forcing its way through the bush, rushing away ahead of me, growing gradually fainter in the distance, and then ceasing entirely. I congratulated myself on the riddance, laughed at my foolish fears, and, stepping out briskly, soon reached the trail to the village, down which I turned. I had not got more than fifty paces from the turn when suddenly, without the slightest warning, some heavy body landed on my shoulders pulling me forcibly backwards, but fortunately not quite upsetting me. Instinctively I drew the machete with my right hand, and endeavoured to turn on my assailant, whom I felt to be slipping from my shoulders, when suddenly I experienced an awful burning, tearing sensation all down the side of my face and neck. Maddened with pain and nearly blinded with blood, I turned

half round, and with all my force dealt my assailant a furious thrust, straight from the point of the machete. It released its grip at once and, with a curious sort of gurgling groan, fell away from me. I felt my head going round and tried to steady myself, but it was no use, my legs gave way under me and I fainted. I don't know how long I lay, but, judging by the time I arrived home, it must have been fully an hour. Anyway, when I came round, I found myself lying across the track, cheek by jowl with a dead, half-grown jaguar, with my machete sticking out of his chest. The left side of my face was horribly stiff and painful ; I could not see out of my left eye ; and my coat, torn to ribbons at the back, was saturated with blood, a pool of which lay beside me. At first when I tried to get up I felt like fainting again, but a good shot of neat rum soon pulled me round, and, tying a handkerchief round my wounded face, I staggered on to the village. Fearing that if I went to my wife in such a plight she would have a fit, I called at the house of the American doctor, who patched me up, advising me to get off to the hospital as soon as possible, then helped me home. I need not describe my wife's scare, or my trip next day to the capital, where it took eight weeks in hospital before I was fit for work again, and then minus one eye. The points which have always puzzled me are : why that accursed jaguar stalked me so long ; why he chose the turning to attack, going ahead and waiting as if he knew I had to go down there, for it is inconceivable that the same animal can have trailed me on former occasions and remembered the route I took ; and, lastly, how a half-grown jaguar managed to screw up sufficient courage to attack a full-grown man, for they are cowardly beasts, and will as a rule only go for unprotected children. When he first sprang on my back he must have fixed his claws in my coat

and shot-bag (made of stiff, untanned hide), as the coat was torn to ribbons, and the shot-bag scored from top to bottom ; whereupon, finding himself slipping down and unable to clamp his jaws in the back of my neck, which was no doubt his main object, he must have grabbed at my head to get a better hold, and so scored my face with his claws. If I had not, by a wonderful piece of luck, happened to find a vital spot with the very first machete thrust, I should probably not be here to tell the tale."

CHAPTER III

Visit to Benque Viejo—*Mestisada* dance—Etiquette of dance—Men and women's dress—Effective ornaments of fire beetles—Description of the dance—Mysterious ginger wine—The Kubipol procession—Its antiquity—"Muddy" Esquivel—Difficulty in getting transport to ruins of Xunantunich—A heterogeneous camp outfit—Making camp—Narrow escape from coral-snake—Chicle is the curse of the Indians of British Honduras—Former luxuries now necessities—"I am a chiclero; I don't work"—Lack of permanent benefit to country of chicle—Excavation in Mound B—Contents of Mound B—An aboriginal American jeweller of 1,300 years ago—Indians believe the occupant tries to revenge himself on me—Maya buried with each individual their personal possessions—Excavation of mound unfinished—Mound A—Bad water—Problem of where ancient inhabitants of city got their water-supply—Ticks, redbug, mosquitoes, boltas-flies, and other insect pests.

I RODE over to the large Indian village of Benque Viejo, situated about nine miles from Cayo, and was invited to a *mestisa* dance, to be given the same evening, an invitation which I gladly accepted. The dance took place in the house of the second *Alcalde*, from which all the cotton partitions, dividing it into three or four rooms, had been removed for the occasion, leaving a single large room with a hard lime floor. Benches were placed around this, and I was accorded the seat of honour—a rickety American rocker. Ladies occupied one side of the room, men the other, with dogs and half-naked children scattered indiscriminately about everywhere. One corner was occupied by the band, consisting of two *marimbas*, or native xylophones, and an accordion; the other by a table covered with bottles of native rum and ginger wine, corn husk cigarettes, sweet

corn cakes, and other refreshment. The band struck up a lively *mestisada*, and several of the men arose, carrying damp-looking handkerchiefs, crossed over to the ladies' side, and each flipped the lady of his choice gently in the face. If she wished to dance, and approved the partner, she got up and took his arm ; if not, she continued talking to her neighbour as if nothing had occurred. The men were dressed in moccasins, cotton trousers, and limp white shirts, the tails of which hung down almost to their knees. The ladies wore a cotton petticoat, or *pik*, and a loose, sleeveless garment cut so low in the neck and back as to conform very closely with modern evening dress. In their luxuriant black hair they wore ornaments made by tying numbers of little phosphorescent beetles around a circle of liana, the effect of which was really charming, as it presented the appearance of a small crown of glowing, greenish, fiery points. The *mestisada*, the only dance on the programme, is monotonous and uninteresting. The man and his partner stand opposite to each other and perform a sort of shuffle ; the man holds his right arm stiffly out like a semaphore, his left hand on his waist, the lady keeping both arms stiffly pointed downwards in the attitude of a tin soldier at attention, while both keep their eyes glued to their feet. The shuffle is kept up, without either touching the other, till they are exhausted and give place to another pair. The dust caused by the shuffling on the limestone floor was appalling, and soon, between tobacco smoke and dust, it was almost impossible to see what was going on. At every interval refreshments were handed round—usually a glass of fiery, neat rum for the men, and a glass of ginger wine for the ladies. There were, I noticed at the beginning of the evening, only three bottles of ginger wine, but it seemed to keep on going merrily round without much

diminution, and, on visiting the refreshment table to try and solve the mystery, I found that the ladies' tippie consisted of a glass three parts full of rum, with just enough ginger wine added to give it a kick. About midnight the proceedings were getting so hilarious that I thought it best to retire.

Next morning about ten the whole population of the village turned out in gala attire for a grand procession, led by the band, in the middle of which, resting on the wooden platform supported on the shoulders of four men, was carried an immense boar's head decorated with ribbons, flags, coloured beads, rosettes, and gold and silver coins. A man walked backwards just in front of the head, which was borne twice round the village in procession, carrying a small calabash of corn, which from time to time he shook in front of the snout, crying in a wheedling tone, "*Coten boox*"—"Come along, little brunette"—apparently in derision of the poor pig's head, which was of a sickly white colour. After this, in accordance with the ancient ritual, the head was cut up, and everyone ate a tiny piece. This feast is given annually by one of the principal men of the village, whom, unless he is very wealthy, it leaves financially crippled for years, if it does not ruin him outright. The individual who gives the feast has the privilege of appointing his successor, which he does by presenting him with a particular piece of the head—hence the Maya name Kubipol, or "delivery of the head." The same feast, with the same method of passing it on from year to year, is described by Landa as practised by the Maya of Yucatan long before the arrival of Europeans in the New World.

On my 1924 visit, I had made up my mind to leave Benque Viejo for the ruins of Xunantunich on Sunday, November 30th, accompanied by my black boy, Jim, and Amado

Esquivel—usually known as “Muddy”—general utility man, half Irish, quarter Spanish, and quarter Maya, combining all the good qualities of the three races in his own person, and able to do almost anything, from making a moccasin or running a motor, to cooking a dinner or building a dug-out. We had tried very hard to get mules and muleteers amongst the natives at Benque Viejo to carry our luggage to the ruins, but they all with one consent began to make excuse ; either they were sick, or the mules were lame, or they were tired, or they didn't want to work on Sunday. The best offer we could get was five dollars per mule per trip, at which rate it would have required at least six trips and cost thirty dollars to transport our outfit for two miles. This was nothing but a hold-up, and I could see the grins on the faces of the crowd who stood around watching the bargaining when they thought the *gringo* was in a tight place, but, just at the moment of compulsory surrender, Muddy luckily ran into a Guatematecan *arriero*, or muleteer, who had arrived with his mule train from Peten the previous evening. He was a short, stocky individual named Zacarias Sanches, strong as a bull, evidently full of energy and pep, and a very different proposition to the miserable, yellow-skinned, bleary-eyed, rum-soaked local grafters. He strode down to the Cabildo, threw his experienced eye over our immense heap of impedimenta, and in two minutes had made his offer to convey it all to the ruins early on the Sunday morning for a total payment of six dollars. He was as good as his word, for next morning before daybreak he had swum three mules over the river, and was awaiting our baggage, which we soon ferried over in a large dug-out. It made very awkward cargo to load on mules, consisting, as it did, of wooden boxes of grub, a pail of lard, picks, shovels, guns, tripods, stone saws, surveying instruments, pots, pans,

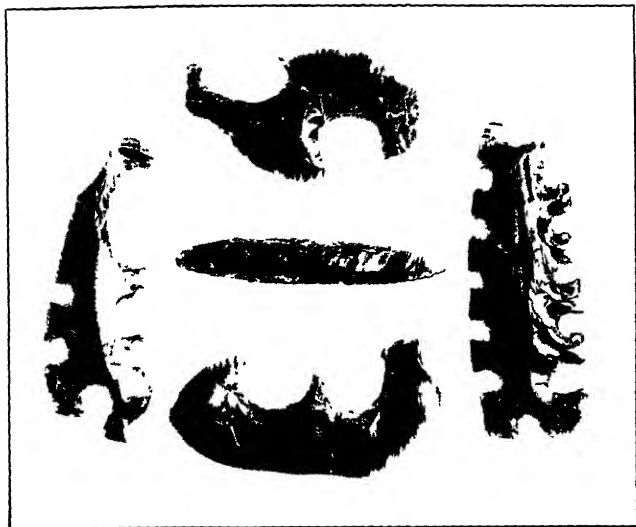
buckets, a tent, photographic outfit, hurricane lamps, etc. In a quarter of an hour, however, half of it was loaded, as if by magic, on the backs of the three mules, though they had to be blindfolded to keep them quiet while this strange and novel cargo was being made fast.

The road, after leaving the river bank, was extremely bad, being merely a narrow pass cut through the high bush, covered with mud, in places half-way up to our knees, full of holes, and criss-crossed by tree-roots in all directions; moreover, it was up-hill most of the way, and though only two miles in length, it took us well over an hour to negotiate. Arrived at the ruins, we found the whole area covered with dense forest, which, owing to the fact that for a couple of weeks there had been incessant rain, was simply saturated with moisture. My own three men—Muddy, Jim, and a nondescript mongrel youth who had helped us with the loading, and expressed a wish to join the outfit—aided by two Indians from Succots (an Indian village a couple of miles from the ruins), soon had a space cleared for the tent, into which Zacarias dumped the first three mule-loads, and departed for the rest of the cargo left at the waterside. He returned in about a couple of hours with all the mixed load in order and unbroken, and we took a reluctant farewell of him, realising that probably we “ne’er should meet his like again.” Before dusk the men had cleared a space of over a *macate* (25 yards square), erected the tent, and built a lean-to shelter of cuhoon leaves for themselves. During the clearing one of them had rather a narrow escape, as he stepped on the tail of a small coral-snake hiding in the leaves, which at once turned and struck at him, but fortunately missed, getting only the ragged edge of his pants; before it had time to strike again the machete descended and severed it in two.

We spent a peaceful night in the bush, free from the incessant barking of dogs, which is the curse of all settlements, large and small, throughout British Honduras. Soon after midnight it commenced to rain very heavily, and we discovered that neither the tent nor the lean-to were entirely water-tight. Next morning early, four Indians from Succots (out of ten whom we had engaged to work as we came through the village) turned up with their machetes. Two of them had just come out of gaol for taking advances from different contractors to go into the Guatemala bush and bleed sapodilla-trees for their gum, known as chicle, which enters largely into the composition of chewing-gum. The chicle business, which has only developed extensively during recent years, has been the curse of the western district of British Honduras. Formerly the Indians made their *milpas*, or corn plantations, in which they grew maize, yams, sweet potato, ochra, pumpkins, beans, cacao, tobacco—in fact, pretty well everything they required in the vegetable line, including coffee, rice, and cotton, which the women spun and wove themselves. They also raised large numbers of pigs and poultry, the surplus of which provided for them any little extra luxuries of civilisation they might desire, such as rum, powder and shot, iron cooking-pots, etc. They were, in fact, as were their forefathers for 2,000 years before the coming of the first European, entirely self-supporting and independent, mixing not at all with the white, the coolie, or the negro of the colony. Came the American contractor for the large chewing-gum companies, offering big prices for chicle, and hitherto unheard-of advances in cash to the chicle-breeder, or *chiclero*, tempting the Indians to give up their old mode of life in pursuit of the will-o'-the-wisp of easy money. The Indians, and, in fact, labourers of all nationalities who became *chicleros*, could earn more in

four months in the bush during the chicle season than in a year at any other work, leaving them with at least half their time available for loafing in the small towns, drinking, love-making, gambling, and fighting. The inevitable result was that plantations and stock were neglected, and the price of food soared as if the country were engaged in a war. In former days maize was \$1 to \$1.50 per cargo; now it is \$2 to \$4; a chicken could be purchased for 25 c. which now costs 75 c.; eggs went from 20 c. to 60 c. per dozen, and other things in proportion. Moreover, the Indian women who formerly were content with the *huipil*, or cotton jacket, and *pik*, or short skirt worn by their ancestors from time immemorial, now demand imported shoes and stockings, silk shawls, and the year before last London fashions—and get them. Dishonesty seems to be inherent in the chicle business; one contractor will steal another's chicle, or buy it from his labourers, while the labourer, not to be outdone, will fraudulently take advances from two or three contractors, not intending to work for any of them. He will even embed pieces of bark, wood, dirt, or even rocks in the blocks of cooked chicle, till "*Caveat emptor*" had become the motto of the whole industry. The price of labour has doubled. Formerly the Indian was glad to work for 50 c. per day; now, as a *chiclero*, if he will condescend to do any work outside the chicle season, he demands at least \$1.25. But he glories in his degradation; when half-drunk you will see him clapping himself on the chest and shouting, "*Yo soy hombre; yo soy chiclero*" ("I am a man, I am a *chiclero*"), as who should say, "*Cives Romanus sum*"; and if you want to hire him you are apt to hear, "*Señor, yo soy chiclero; yo no trabajo*" ("Sir, I am a *chiclero*; I don't work").

The curious thing is that, notwithstanding the increased



OBSIDIAN OBJECTS FROM MOUND

[p. 52]



PREPARING CHICLE, CHEWING-GUM

wages and luxury in living, no one seems to have really benefited by the coming of chicle. The labourer and his family have acquired extravagant tastes, and lost the habit of the old, simple life, so that their increased revenue is by no means commensurate with their increased demand for luxuries, unknown, and consequently undesired, in the old days. The contractor rarely seems to have any cash, and, when he has, it is soon gambled or dissipated away ; in fact, the only beneficiaries under the system are a few large *concessionnaires*, and the great companies to whom the chicle is consigned in the far-off U.S.A.

The seven men available, including Jim, were put on to cut a passage through the bush up the side of Mound B, and to clear its flat top. It is pyramidal in shape, 35ft. high and 300ft. in circumference. At its base, directly facing the great temple, is a small stela, or monolith, of hard limestone, 12ft. long, 4ft. 2in. broad, and 1ft. 3in. thick. Its summit is oval and quite flat, measuring 45ft. by 30ft. It was obvious that no building had ever stood on this space, for no trace remained of squared stones ; the inference is, therefore, that it had been a burial mound. The clearing having been accomplished, the seven men started excavating a pit 12ft. by 12ft. in the centre of the flat, table-like top. Forming a layer about 6in. deep on the surface, was the accumulated vegetal humus of thirteen centuries, directly beneath which appeared the top stratum of the original mound. This averaged 1ft. in thickness, and consisted of fragments of limestone, amongst which were found the following objects :

1. Over 100 cores of flint, varying in weight from three to thirty pounds, all roughly trimmed, as if for facility in transport.

2. Thirty-five beautifully chipped flints, with five

obsidians, all of eccentric shape, as crescents, crosses, rings, stars, etc.

3. Two small polished blocks of jade, not perforated for suspension.

4. Two large Area Grandis shells, the valves still hinged together, from which the ancient Maya obtained the material to make their red beads and other ornaments.

5. A white stone bead whose flattened sides were marked by dots in this way,

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 suggesting that it had been used either in some game, or for a tally.

6. Two large cockle-shells.

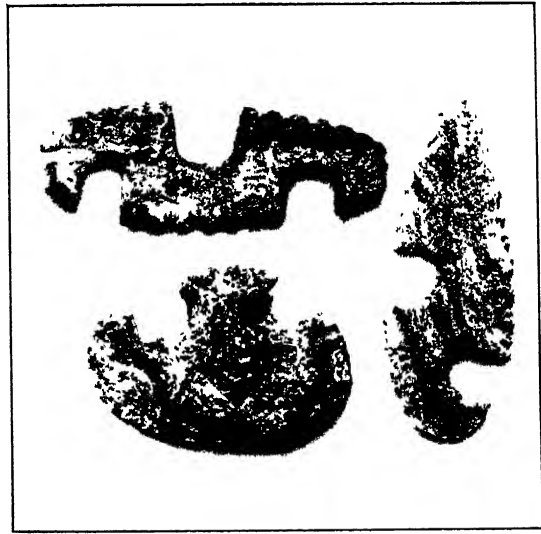
7. A group of five univalvular shells, adherent to each other, from which the Maya obtained mother-of-pearl for earrings, inlays, etc.

8. A rough block of obsidian.

9. Hammer-stones of flint of various sizes.

10. Two small stone chisels.

About the centre of this cache, and six inches beneath the original surface of the mound, were found portions of a human femur, or thigh-bone, and fibula, or small leg-bone, both in a very advanced state of disintegration. The men continued excavation in this mound to a depth of 22ft., the original hole contracting, and becoming funnel-shaped as they descended. It was solidly built of layers of large blocks of limestone alternating with layers of rubble, both held together by a somewhat friable mortar, but forming an extremely refractory material to dig in, almost like solid masonry. At a depth of 22ft. a well-built wall of squared stones, held together by tough mortar, was encountered, and this was followed down for 5ft., or to



ECCENTRIC SHAPED FLINTS



PAINTED VASE SHOWING HIEROGLYPHS,
SACRIFICE, AND OFFERING,

within 8ft. of the base of the mound. Progress had been extremely slow during the last part of the work, and unfortunately the time at my disposal was exhausted, so I had to leave the mound unfinished till a future occasion.

Almost in the centre of the mound, about 15ft. from the surface, was brought to light a flat piece of very fine-grained, tough limestone, measuring 12in. by 6in., one surface of which had been polished all over and scored by innumerable grooves, probably made in the process of sharpening needles, awls, and other sharp-pointed implements, while the smooth surface had been used for polishing. With this was a bone needle in an excellent state of preservation. A large gum-balimbo tree grew almost over the skeletal remains, and as the men dug around it they chopped through the roots, till, with a crash, it fell within a foot of my shoulder, as absorbed in the discovery of some of the flints I sat on the edge of the excavation, quite oblivious to what was going on behind me. The Indians firmly believed that the occupant of the mound was making one last effort to still the hands which were robbing his possessions, disturbing his bones, and waking him from his thirteen-centuries-long sleep. Moreover, I think they left the fates to decide the issue between their remote ancestor and myself, for they never gave me the least warning that the tree was about to fall, though they were probably rather relieved that victory rested with me, for did I not represent the pay roll? I had hoped to find within this mound a stone-lined burial chamber, as a similar mound opened on the Rio Nuevo some years ago, on whose summit a number of eccentrically shaped flints and human bones were found, contained within its structure a very fine stone-lined sepulchral cyst, filled with sand, and divided about its centre into an upper and lower chamber by a layer of human skulls filling the entire

humen of the chamber. The bones and eccentric flints were here on the summit, but the burial chamber was absent, unless it is right at the bottom of the mound, and not in its exact centre, in which case the wall last discovered probably forms one of its boundaries—points which will be made clear at the resumption of excavation during the next dry season.

The objects found on the summit of this mound are singularly suggestive ; nodules of flint of various colours, nodules of jade, cores of obsidian, and the shells from which were derived material for making beads, earrings, gorgets, and other ornaments, together with hammer stones, chisels, and a grinding stone for working these materials ; in fact, what amounts to the entire outfit of an Old Empire Maya jeweller and lapidary, together with a number of his finished products in flint, obsidian, and ivory. We learn from Landa, a bishop of Yucatan who wrote about the middle of the sixteenth century on the religious beliefs of the Maya, whose language he had learnt, and with whose manners and customs he was probably better acquainted than any other contemporary writer, that they were accustomed to bury with their dead objects associated with them in life—with the priest his manuscripts on divination, astrology, and medicine ; with the lady her rouge, powder, mirror, depilatory, etc. ; with the housewife her pots, loom, and spindle-whorls ; with the warrior his spear and shield ; with the child its toys ; and so on. Now here we have what can be nothing else than the stock-in-trade of an ancient jeweller, and I think the inference is fairly obvious that the individual buried beneath, whether on the summit, or, as we shall ascertain later on, in a chamber at the base, was a jeweller and worker in flints, ivory, and precious stones. That he was a person of the first importance is indicated by the size



SUMMIT OF BURIAL MOUND

of the monument erected over him, and by its nearness to the main temple, on the terraces of which it is probable that the rulers and higher priests were interred. As will be related farther on, there were found beneath the main stela four eccentric flints of precisely the same technique in manufacture as those found in Mound B, and it is not improbable that the occupant of Mound B was their maker. Beneath the stela of Mound D twelve eccentric flints were discovered, of similar shape but of a much cruder technique, for which he was not responsible, as Mound D probably was not erected till some time after he had already become an occupant of mound B.

Four extra Indian labourers who turned up were sent to cut a *picado* through the bush to the summit of Mound A, upon which stood the principal temple, and to clear the ruins for photographic purposes.

This mound is 315ft. long and 81ft. high to the base of the main temple (V in the plan), which occupies the western half of its flat top. The eastern half is covered by a smaller group of stone buildings, now almost completely in ruins. The centre of its western side is occupied by the ruins of a great stone stairway by which the terrace at the summit of the mound is approached (M in the plan). The main temple is in a very ruinous condition, and the exact plan of its structure is not easily to be made out. It appears to have consisted originally of three storeys surmounted by a broad roof comb, and was evidently constructed at two different periods, as the rooms in the lowest storey had been filled in with great blocks of limestone and mortar to form a solid foundation for the two upper storeys and the roof comb, which were added at a later date, a device frequently adopted by Maya architects to render their temples more imposing. Each storey contained nine rooms, the central

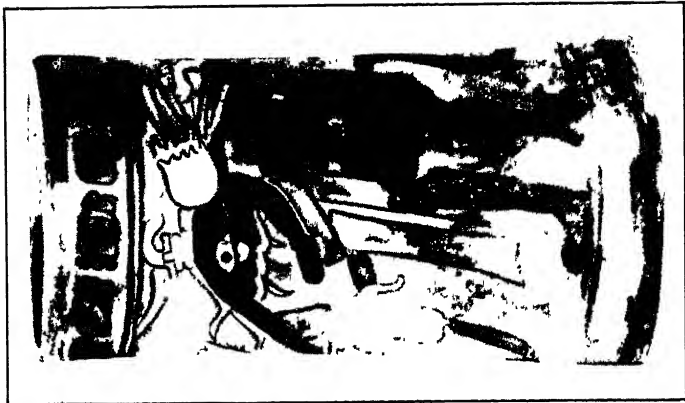
ones measuring 27ft. 6in. in length, the side ones 17ft. 9in. The rooms were all roofed by the usual triangular truncated Maya ceilings, constructed by allowing each course of stones to overlap slightly the one immediately beneath, and filling in the gap at the top with a row of flat cap-stones. ~~All~~ were covered with plaster, upon which traces of graffiti, scratched probably by descendants of the original builders, were still discernible. The height of the temple, including the roof comb, had originally been about 50ft., which, added to the 80ft. of the substructure, would give a total height of the top of the roof comb above the ground of approximately 130ft. From this lofty elevation a magnificent view must have been obtained of all the surrounding country, for the substructure itself is built on the summit of a considerable natural elevation. The eastern side of the lowest storey has been elaborately carved, but great masses of stone, mortar, and earth have fallen from above, almost completely burying the sculpture, and it will require a considerable amount of time and labour to remove this material.

We suffered a good deal from the scarcity of water, as the nearest creek is a mile away in the bush, over a very hilly path ankle-deep in mud, and it had to be fetched by two Indian boys carrying large hour-glass-shaped calabashes on a long pole. The water was none too good when one got it, as it formed a milky mixture with tea, and had to be drunk in strict moderation by me, as it acted like a mild dose of Epsom salts. We were a good deal puzzled as to where the ancient dwellers in this city obtained their water supply, as it is hardly conceivable that they should have sent so far for it as the creek ; on the other hand, we found no trace of those great underground tanks or cisterns known as chultuns, hollowed out in the limestone, in which the

ancient Maya at many of their cities stored water ; yet it is quite possible that these may exist, and that the narrow circular openings have in the course of the centuries become choked up by fallen tree-trunks, limbs, and other vegetal débris.

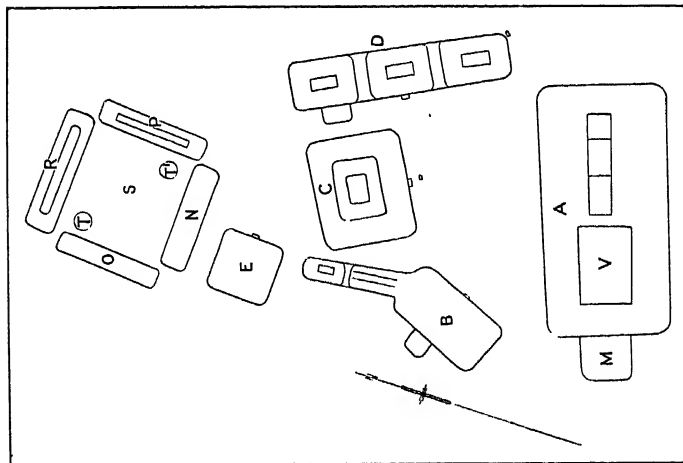
One never realises what a boon a bath is till one has gone without it for a week or two in a tropical climate, and the warm sponge-over taken from a small tin dish-pan containing about two quarts of this rock-hard water was one of the greatest luxuries I ever enjoyed. It was preceded by a good rub-over with a mixture of kerosene oil and tobacco-juice to loosen the ticks and red bug accumulated during the last few days. Insects are undoubtedly the main curse of the bush. Ticks of all sorts abounded here (though it was the rainy season), varying in size from a large split pea to microscopic little chaps into whose nests along the bush trails one is constantly brushing, when a veritable shower of these bloodthirsty little beasts is scattered over one's trousers or coat, spreading rapidly in all directions, and "digging in" on the inner side of the thighs, all round the waist, and in other spots where the skin is thin, and incidentally tender, and the anchorage is good. Unless removed with kerosene or tobacco-juice, they hang on like grim death, and suck blood till they turn into tiny distended bladders. Red bug, called by the Spaniards *coloradillo* (minute scarlet insects which can only be seen by the aid of a small magnifying glass), are even worse than ticks, as they burrow deeper into the skin, causing intolerable itching, and are much more difficult to get rid of. Mosquitoes of all sorts and sizes abounded, but one gets used to them ; and here, buried in the depths of the bush, there is no micro-organism of malaria, yellow fever, or filariasis for them to carry, so their attacks can be

borne philosophically. Worse than the mosquito, however, is the batlas-fly, a minute peripatetic suction pump whose bite itches intolerably, and leaves a little red circle of blood, about the size of a small pin's head, extravasated beneath the skin, which in a day or two turns black, and does not wear off for weeks. I have seen a white man's hands turn almost black on the backs after a few weeks' residence in the bush where these flies abound.



PAINTED VASE SHOWING THE TAPIR
OR LONG-NOSED GOD

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BENQUE VIEJO : PLAN

CHAPTER IV

Excavation in Mound E—A burial mound and its contents—Probable sex of occupant—Excavation postponed—Mound C and stela—Sculpture of warrior—The only date recorded in the ruins, January 31st, 590—Other stelæ probably covered with painted stucco—Desertion by the Maya of all their magnificent cities, for some unknown reason—Difficulty of taking paper casts of sculptures—Eccentric flints found beneath stela—Water ti-ti—Has saved many lives—Food easily procurable by those lost in the bush, but not water—Water cactus provides foul water for drinking—A celebrated bush-doctor—The legend of the ruins, which gave them their name of “ Stone Maiden ”—Bargain with the bush-doctor to show me the herbs used as remedies by him—Use of fire-drill—Doctor’s information not entirely reliable—“ Corazon de Jesus ” leaves and their medicinal use—Mound D—Altar erected by modern Indians on one of the fragments of the ancient stela before which their ancestors worshipped—Bitten by Tzajorin ant, curious remedy—Strange incident of stray dog—An Indian wake, or *velorio*—Our Indian woman cook, Chiapa Chi—Her language and cooking technique—Curious treatment of an Indian baby—Carib schoolmaster in Maya village—Rise of the Carib, and fall of the Maya—Black hornets and scorpions.

OUR labourers having increased to fifteen, we put on four, first to clear the bush from, and then excavate, the summit of Mound E. This mound, as will be seen by the plan, is situated to the north of Mound B. It is pyramidal in shape, 30ft. high, 80ft. long, and 80ft. wide at the base. Like Mound B, it had not served as a substructure for the support of a temple or other building, and was consequently probably a sepulchral mound, but, unlike B, its apex, instead of being flat, was crowned by a sharp ridge of limestone blocks 6ft. long. Excavation was started from the summit, and the mound was found to be built of large boulders of limestone and a good deal of rubble, held together by a

friable mortar. Two feet beneath the surface, and not contained within any chamber, were found portions of a human skeleton, consisting of fragments of the leg and arm bone, vertebræ, and part of the skull, which had probably belonged to a young adult. The corpse had been fully extended, with the head pointing towards the north. At the feet were found half a broken flint spear-head, covered with a white patina, and a broken obsidian knife. The face had been covered by a shallow, circular, saucer-shaped vessel of yellow pottery, upon which were outlined geometrical devices in red ; this was broken into small fragments by the large blocks of limestone which had been piled upon it. On each side of this pot were found two very beautiful little *orejeras*, or earrings, of translucent light green jade, evidently just as they had fallen from the ears when disintegration set in. It was impossible to tell the sex of the skeleton from the bones found, but these tiny ear ornaments would indicate that it was that of a female, as the ear plugs worn by the men were very much larger and heavier, though the spear-head would point to its being a male. The excavation was continued to a depth of six feet through the structure of the mound, but, as nothing further was discovered, it was discontinued till something definite had been ascertained as to the contents of Mound B, which it resembled closely in structure. As already mentioned, was never finished excavating Mound B, so this mound also stands over till the next dry season.

Two more Indians arrived for work, and were put on to clean the main stela in front of Mound C. This mound is 132ft. long, 95ft. broad, and 30ft. high. The stela, which is placed at the centre of its west side, faces the front of the main temple on Mound A. This monolith was originally 7ft. 8in. high, 3ft. 4in. broad, and 1ft. 6in. thick. Upon



BENQUE VIEJO GREAT MOUND



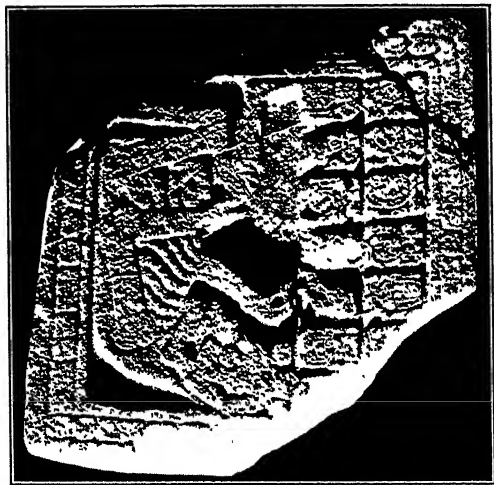
GANG OF LABOURERS

the surface facing the main temple is sculptured in low relief the figure of a warrior, with elaborate feather head-dress, holding in his outstretched right hand a ceremonial bar. He is standing upon the back of a captive or slave, who is depicted crouching on hands and knees. On either side of the warrior's legs are sculptured two rows of hieroglyphics. The stela has been broken off about three feet from its base, and both figure and glyphs are very much defaced. This was probably caused by the fall of a gigantic tree across the top of the monolith, an accident which may have occurred a thousand years ago. Unfortunately, when it was broken, the sculptured surface fell uppermost, and the rain and weather of thirteen centuries have further defaced the carving. The face of the stela was covered with a tough, adherent, green moss, and it took two men a couple of days, scrubbing with hard brushes and palm leaves, to clear this off sufficiently to make it possible for me to get a photograph and cast of the design. The column of hieroglyphics on the left side shows two which, though considerably defaced owing to the fracture in the stone having passed through the lower one, may probably be read as 5 Ahau 3 Kayab. Now this date is the calendar round position of the end of Katun 1 of Cycle 10; the whole date should therefore be read 10.1.0.0.0.5 Ahau 3 Kayab, or the completion of Katun 1 (20-year period) of Cycle 10 (400-year period) from the commencement of Maya chronology (a certain date 4 Ahau 8 Cumhu), which fell on a calendar round date 5 Ahau 3 Kayab. This, according to Spinden's astronomical correlation between the Maya and Christian calendars, which agrees with Morley's correlation based on documentary evidence from the time of the Conquest, falls on the date January 31st, A.D. 590, and this, we may take it, was the date upon which

this stone was erected to commemorate the end of Katun 1 of Cycle 10.

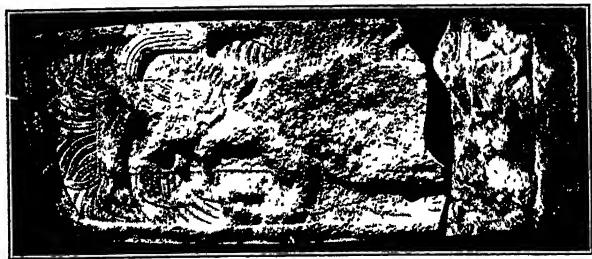
The flat summit of Mound C, in front of which this stela stands, was occupied by a long, narrow, stone building, now completely in ruins. Five stelæ in all were found at these ruins, but this was the only one recording a date—indeed the only one sculptured at all. The probability is that the other plain stelæ had been covered with stucco, upon which were painted the dates of their erection, with the figure of a god or ruler, such as were commonly depicted upon Maya stelæ. A stela was erected in all Maya cities at the end of every Katun, or 20-year period, and as there are five stelæ at this site, it is probable that it was occupied for a period of from 100 to 140 years. It was originally, no doubt, a colony from the great city of Naranjo, situated only a few miles to the north-west, and was founded probably about the end of Cycle 9. In common with all the other Maya cities of Guatemala and Honduras, it was doubtless deserted by its inhabitants somewhere in the third Katun of Cycle 10, or between A.D. 600 and 620.

At Naranjo, the nearest city to Xunantunich, there exists a stela which is almost the exact counterpart of the one described. A warrior, with lofty and elaborate feather head-dress, stands upon the back of a captive or slave who is crouching upon his arms and knees. The warrior holds in his extended right hand a staff or sceptre representing a highly conventionalised serpent. Upon the back of this stela is very clearly depicted the Initial Series 9.18.10.0.0.10 Ahau 8 Yax, corresponding to a date in the year A.D. 540, which is just fifty years earlier than the Xunantunich inscription. At Seibal, the next nearest city Xunantunich, several Initial Series dates are found to recorded; the latest of these is 10.1.0.0.0.5 Ahau 3 Kayab,



STELA INSCRIBED 5 AHAU 3 KAYAB
31 JAN. A.D. 590

Photographs by Peabody Museum, Harvard, U.S.A



ALTAR WITH FIGURE
OF DEATH GOD

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or precisely the same date as that found recorded at Xunantunich, which would indicate that these two cities were deserted at about the same time, and that the sculptured stela was probably the last erected, and represents the highest achievement of the inhabitants before they joined the great Maya migration from the cities of the south into the barren, waterless wastes of Yucatan, an explanation for the cause of which has probably given rise to more controversy amongst American archæologists than any other subject.

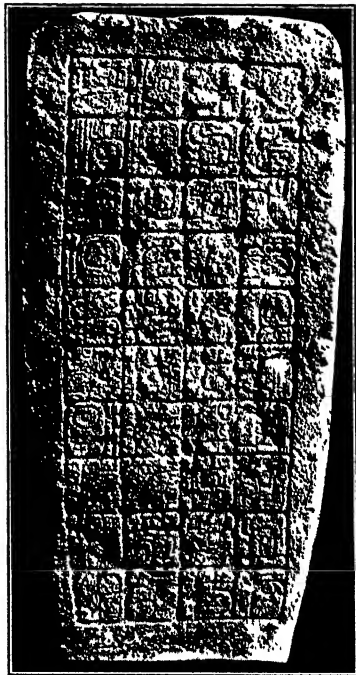
In taking a cast of the glyph I encountered a considerable amount of difficulty ; in the first place, I had neglected to bring with me a supply of the material generally used for this purpose—a soft, brown, porous paper, used for wrapping Spanish oranges—so had to use an inferior grade of ordinary brown paper, which was too tough, and did not fit well the contours of the sculpture. I chose a fine morning, but hardly had I got the moulding finished than the sky darkened and it came on to pour. I made the best protection I could with my mackintosh and a tarpaulin, but knew the cast would never dry in such weather ; indeed it was not till three days later that, by exposing it to every passing gleam of sunshine, and finally lighting a fire all round it, I was enabled to get the cast sufficiently dry to remove. The technique in making paper casts is simple, though a large surface requires endless patience in carrying it out. Layers of wet paper—the softer the better—are first placed over the sculpture, and well beaten in with a hard-bristled brush till they take the shape of the design, fitting in snugly to every crevice. Layer after layer is applied in this way, the outer layers being covered with paste to stiffen them, and all hollows and spaces filled in with plugs of wet paper made to fit accurately into them ; finally the whole is

allowed to dry in the sun, when it will be found that the resultant cast, though not quite so good as a plaster mould, is infinitely lighter, and easier of transport on mule-back, where every extra pound of equipment tells. On digging beneath the base of the stela, which remained standing upright, I found that it rested upon the limestone rock, and that in front of it had been excavated in the bed-rock a small pocket or recess, in which lay three eccentrically shaped flints. These, as already remarked, so closely resemble those found in Mound B, both in shape, size, and chipping technique, that they are probably the work of the same individual.

I was introduced that afternoon, while searching the bush for burial mounds with one of my Indian boys, to the water ti-ti, a dark-coloured, rough-barked liana, about as thick round as my wrist. Though very thirsty, I did not like to drink the creek water without boiling, and told Pedro so, on which he went a few yards into the bush, and, seizing a great rope of the liana hanging from a branch 50ft. up, sliced off a section about 2½ft. long with two blows of his machete, and, holding it over his head, allowed the water—of which it contained about an ounce, clear, pure, and cool—to drip into his mouth. I proceeded to follow his example, though it took a dozen sections to relieve my thirst. Many an Indian has been saved from death by thirst by this ti-ti, when lost in the Yucatan bush, where streams are not, and water holes are few and far between. Fruits, nuts, and edible roots abound, and game is incredibly tame, so that food-supply presents no difficulty, but, with the exception of this liana and a large, broad-leaved cactus which holds water in the spaces between its rows of leaves, practically no water-supply exists. The water in the cactus, being open to the air, affords a combined drinking-trough



NARANJO STELA
*Photographs by Peabody Museum,
 Harvard, U S.A.*



REVERSE.
 DATED A D. 540

and bathroom to myriads of insects, who not infrequently use it also as a convenient place in which to commit suicide, so that it usually smells aloud, is of a soup-like consistency, and is not to be compared for a moment with that supplied by the liana.

This particular morning there turned up at the ruins a celebrated local character amongst the Indians, Urbano Patt, the most renowned shaman, bush-medico, and snake-doctor in all the district. He was a curiously thin, wizened, dried-up, little Indian of indeterminate age, but possessing a look of far greater intelligence than the majority of the Maya, who, notwithstanding their ancient and lofty lineage, are, it must be admitted, somewhat bovine in aspect and intellect. His appearance was not impressive, dressed as he was in cotton shirt and pants—none too clean—an old pair of moccasins, a dreadful old straw hat, a tiger-skin bag hanging over one shoulder—the one modest badge of his office visible—and a great machete strapped to his side. Yet there was not lacking a certain dignity and assurance in his manner, which was courteous and urbane, as one celebrated physician meeting another of a different school, a smile on his face, hat raised, and hand outstretched in greeting. He bade me welcome to Xunantunich, which I learnt for the first time was the Indian name for the ruins. The word means in Maya, literally, “stone maiden,” and its origin, as told by Urbano, is somewhat peculiar. Some years ago, when the Maya first settled in Benque Viejo and discovered the ruins, one of their number started out hunting one morning with his three dogs, and climbed the temple mound in search of the freshly made hole of a gibbon, as it was a favourite place for this animal to burrow. Crossing the mound just below the base of the temple, he was suddenly brought up “all standing” by the sight of a beautiful

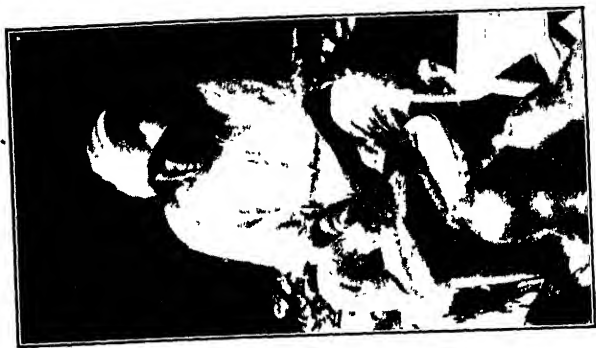
statuesque Maya maiden, of heroic size, clad in *huipil* and *pik*, standing motionless by the side of the mouth of the passage which runs beneath the temple. She appeared of a dazzling and supernatural whiteness, as she stood full in the rays of the rising sun, and looked with fixed and stony stare, as it appeared to him, across the intervening bush to the valley, where later the Indians built the village of Succots. On recovering a little from his first shock, he promptly turned tail, and, throwing aside his gun, bolted incontinently down the hillside and made for the river. He reported the matter at once to the *Chaac*, or native priest, and both of them started back for the ruins. Arriving at the mound, the *Chaac* took the lead, and soon came to the mouth of the tunnel, only to find that the stone maiden had disappeared. They found the gun thrown aside in the bush, but of the three dogs and of the Xunantunich nothing was ever seen again. It is probable that the dogs, entering one of the limestone caves of the neighbourhood, encountered a jaguar instead of a gibbon, while the lady can only be regarded as the creation of a singularly lively and vivid imagination, though the tale is firmly believed by the Indians to this day.

I came to an arrangement with the old man whereby, for the sum of three dollars daily, food, and a reasonable supply of rum, he would go out into the bush, collect Maya remedies, and give me their native names and supposed medicinal qualities. He first, however, showed me how to make fire by the Indian method. Producing a small slab of a very light wood known as *chaca*, he squatted down on the ground, and scraped up some shavings with a piece of sharp flint round the edges of a little funnel-shaped depression in the wood. Into this depression he then inserted the pointed end of a round stick of an extremely hard,

heavy wood known as Cuktzuk, then rapidly rotated the one within the other. In a very few minutes the fine shavings smouldered, and then caught light, and he had his fire. This method (or a spark from flint caught on tinder) was at one time the only means of obtaining fire understood by the Indians, but now, except in quite remote villages, or for ceremonial purposes, it has been almost superseded by the match. After lunch Urbano started off into the bush, and returned about dark with more than twenty samples of bark, leaves, fruit, nuts, roots, and latex, all of which he assured me had most valuable medicinal qualities. I wrote down their native names and uses in a note-book, though I accepted the information with reserve, for during his absence I had made a haphazard collection of various botanical specimens from the immediate neighbourhood of the ruins, which I showed him, and to each he had no hesitation in fitting an unpronounceable Maya name and a string of useful medicinal qualities. Some of the bush remedies are really useful, as fever grass, which is a powerful diaphoretic and diuretic, and is given in malaria with good effect, also the milky juice of the chichem, or poison-wood tree, which blisters whenever it touches the skin, and is sprayed as a local application over enlarged spleens ; but many are used quite empirically, or because of a fancied resemblance to the diseased organ, or to the cause of the disease. A surface root which grows on the mounds, and so closely resembles a centipede that in climbing I have often started back under the impression that I was about to put my hand on one of these insects, when, as a matter of fact, it was one of the roots, is regarded as a sovereign remedy for centipede stings. A thin root with bulbous swellings, resembling a chain of swollen lymphatic glands, is ground up and applied to enlarged glands in any part of the body. The leaf of a plant

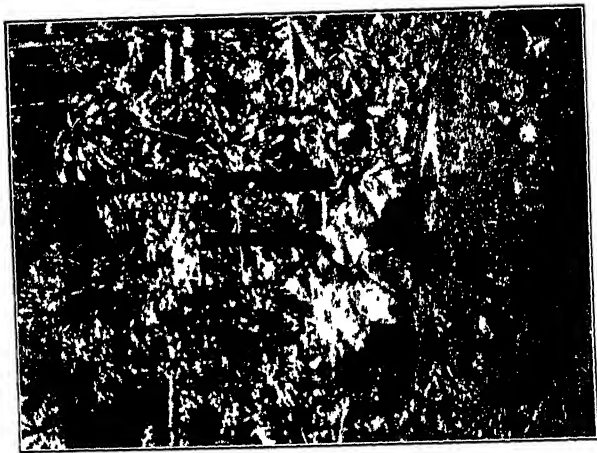
known as the "Corazon de Jesus" or "Heart of Jesus," partly on account of its shape, and partly on account of the curious natural perforations which give it a certain resemblance to conventional representations to the "Sacred Heart of Jesus" seen in Roman Catholic churches throughout Latin America, is highly prized as a medicine. To it was ascribed the power of alleviating all those psychic ills usually referred to the region of the heart, such as jealousy, unrequited love, illicit passion, etc., but, curiously enough, the leaf has acquired a secondary use, for the relief of physical ills of the generative organs, for which it is now almost exclusively employed.

Six men were put on to dig on the summit of Mound D. The mound is 317ft. long, by 60ft. broad. It is divided into three flat-topped peaks, as seen in the plan, separated by two depressions, the peaks being raised 14ft. above the general level of the mound. On its west side is an almost square projection 6ft. high, probably the site of the original stairway leading to the top of the mound. Crowning the summit of each of these three secondary mounds, or peaks, is the ruin of a small oblong building, containing a single chamber built of flat, roughly squared stones, held together by friable mortar. These buildings are now completely broken down, only a few feet of the base of the walls of each still remaining *in situ*. At the base of the central mound stands a plain limestone monolith, 7ft. 10in. high, 2ft. 10in. broad, and 1ft. 4in. thick, facing west. On digging beneath it, within a small pocket hollowed out of the rock upon which it rests were found a number of small flints of eccentric shapes. These are much more crudely-fashioned, smaller, and of poorer workmanship than those found either beneath the sculptured stela or on the summit of Mound B. At the base of the eastern extremity of the



OUR COOK

[p. 70]



FALLEN MONOLITH AND CROSS

mound stood a plain stela, now fallen and broken into a number of fragments. Upon the largest of these, as shown in the photograph, the Indians had erected a small altar consisting of a cedarwood cross with a small heap of stones around it. This little altar stands by the side of the track, and each wayfarer who passes places upon it either a stone or a few flowers, saying an "Ave" or "Pater" as he does so. I could not help reflecting that very similar petitions were made and prayers offered to the gods before this very stone thirteen centuries ago, while the offerings of fruit and flowers accompanying them were practically identical in both cases.

Next morning old Urbano appeared soon after coffee, and started off into the bush, returning in the afternoon with thirty more botanical specimens used by the Indians for medicinal purposes. Some of these are applied externally in the form of fomentations or poultices, others are taken internally as powders, boluses, or infusions. Every conceivable disease has its own remedy, and many of them two or three, while for such prevalent diseases as fever, granos, or boils, ulcers, headache, constipation, and diarrhoea, there are at least a dozen remedies, which may be given together or one after the other, till a cure is effected—or the patient dies. One most excellent, and, as I can personally vouch, efficacious remedy was tried out on myself. While sitting on a log, talking to the old man, I was bitten on the arm by a Tzojorin, an enormous ant, $\frac{3}{4}$ in. long, the poison of which is fully as painful as that of a bee. I was always under the impression that this was injected by the insect's formidable mandibles, but Urbano pointed out that the beast is armed both fore and aft, for its tail possesses a long, hollow, retractile needle, through which its poison is injected beneath the skin. The remedy, however, lies

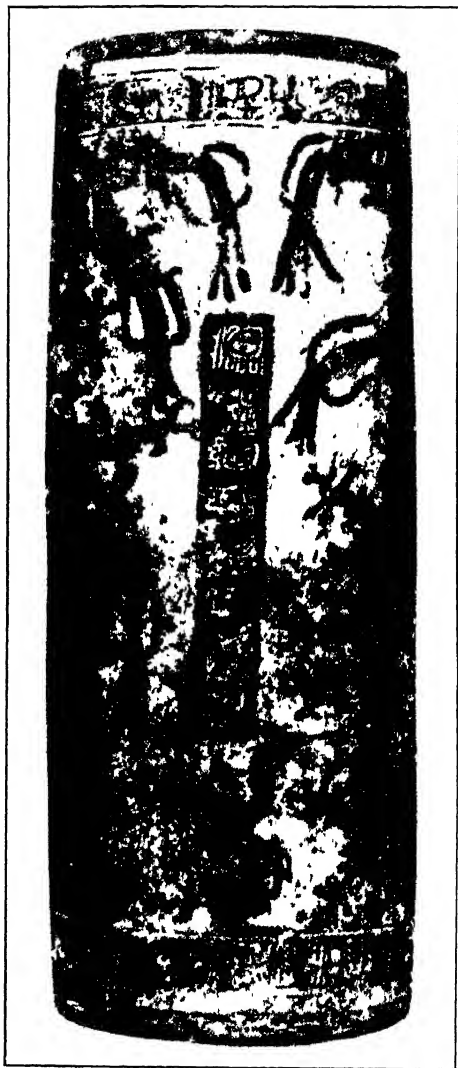
in the ant itself, for if it is eviscerated and the "innards" applied at once to the sting the pain disappears as if by magic, nor does the place swell and inflame afterwards as it otherwise would. From the ant's point of view nature seems to have provided it with but a poor protective mechanism, as the first sting is apt to be its last, if the stingee is acquainted with its secret.

A curious incident occurred the previous night. On the Tuesday a small white cur dog, very miserable and dejected, with every rib showing clearly through his skin, suddenly turned up at camp from the bush. He may have been a stray from some chicle camp, or possibly his master may have met with an accident while hunting in the bush. We fed him and treated him well, and he settled down comfortably as a member of the expedition. He was a curious little animal, walking stiff-legged and deliberately, lifting first the right fore, then the left hind, left fore, and right hind foot high in the air, and never altering this curious stilted gait. He made constant trips to the top of the almost perpendicular mounds, though for what purpose he himself alone knew. He never barked or made the noises usual to dogs, and even a chicken-bone produced the merest flicker of his tail. About 2 p.m. I was awakened by a series of short, staccato barks just outside the tent, followed by the sound of hastily retreating footsteps crashing through the bush on the opposite side. Switching on the electric torch, I seized my gun, and pushing through the tent-flaps, found Pek, as we had christened him (i.e. Maya "pup"), standing stiff-legged, the hairs on his back bristling, barking away at footsteps growing gradually fainter in the distance. Now the previous day I had sent to Cayo for money to pay the men's wages, and I am convinced that some Mexican, or Petenero chicle-bleeder,

VASE PAINTED RED,
YELLOW AND BLACK

FOUND IN CAVE NEAR
BENQUE VIEJO.

TOP HIEROGLYPHIC OF
VERTICAL ROW IS 8
AHAU, OR 106000
8 AHAU 8 YAX, CORRE-
SPONDING TO 25 AUG
688 A.D, OR 98 YEARS
LATER THAN THE STELA
AT THE RUINS.



most of whom would cheerfully commit murder for ten cents, got wind of this cash in camp, and came prowling around to see if there was anything doing in the way of a quiet, unobtrusive murder and robbery, followed by a skip over the Guatemala border, only a mile away, to safety and affluence. In this, however, he was foiled by the faithful Pek, who had nobly rewarded the kindness shown him.

On the following night a *velorio*, or wake, was held at Benque Viejo, the subject being the son of one, and brother of another, of my labourers, who were naturally suffering from the effects next morning. This was the third man who had been "waked" in the Indian villages since my arrival a week before, each of whom had several relatives amongst my labourers, who consider it obligatory upon them to sit up drinking all night as a mark of respect to the memory of the departed. Three deaths per week appears to indicate a somewhat abnormal death-rate amongst a community of 500 or so, and if it lasted, the entire population would soon disappear. Between the enlarged spleens and malaria, from which nearly all the men suffer, and the *velorios*, one can never expect the entire gang to turn up to work on any particular day, so that afternoon, accompanied by Muddy, I visited the village of Succots with a view to hiring more Indians and, if possible, an Indian woman as a cook, for I found that between gathering fuel, lighting the fire, watching the pots boil, and clearing up, the labour of at least three men was more or less interfered with, while no one was satisfied with the cooking. We had no difficulty in engaging extra labour, but the lady cook was much harder to obtain, and it was only after many unsuccessful interviews that at last, by the offer of five dollars per week, I succeeded in engaging one who agreed to turn up on Monday.

I never ascertained her name, but christened her Chiapa Chi, after John L. Steven's celebrated Maya cook in Yucatan, whom she closely resembled. She was dried up, wrinkled, and silent, never speaking, and answering only in monosyllables, while she worked for me. Indeed, I thought that, being the only woman amongst such a crowd of men, she was afraid of being compromised, though nature had supplied her with an almost perfect natural mask against the most poisonous gas of passion. She was the first to turn up each morning, and the last to leave at night, arriving with a great macapaal, or net, slung by a strap over her forehead and supported on her back, containing cooking utensils and other paraphernalia. The only occasion upon which I ever saw her show any human emotion was when one of the labourers borrowed—without asking permission—her macapaal to carry a heavy rubbing-stone for me to the river bank. Then, without raising her voice, and without the least sign of emotion upon her wooden face, she launched into such a stream of Maya invective as I have never heard equalled. The men listened in awed silence, and the delinquent simply returned the macapaal and slunk off without a word. She brought the corn-cakes with her ready-made, and so had only the beans to cook, with some sweet potato and pumpkins—the last, I fear, borrowed from a neighbouring *milpa* without the owner's cognisance, though I did not make too close enquiries into the matter. Her stove, a simple affair, consisted of three stones placed at the angles of a triangle, while she had only to reach behind her amongst the bush recently felled in clearing the camp to get as much firewood as she wanted. She was, however, a marked success. The chicken, which under Muddy's régime had been like a leather property fowl, was quite decent; the rice, instead of a soggy, dripping mass like

wet mortar, came up dry, soft, and with the grains separate. The men too, I noticed, ate all their rations, and came back for more, instead of, as previously, surreptitiously handing over half of them to Pek.

Before leaving the village I had a curious experience while visiting the house of one of my Succots labourers. His wife was lying in the hammock, nursing an extremely dirty and unattractive infant, its face covered with molasses, over which it had smeared dirt from the mud floor. This child stared, wide-eyed and fascinated, at me for a couple of minutes, and its mother observing this, remarked: "Oh, señor, she has taken a fancy to you; you must kiss her."

"But," said I, "I don't want to kiss her, her face is all smeared with sticky dirt."

"But, señor, you *must* kiss her now, for if you don't she will suffer from the evil eye and perhaps die."

"Suppose," I answered, "she was fourteen or fifteen years older, would you still want me to kiss her?"

"Oh, no, Señor Doctor, in that case I should expect you to marry her."

I saw a much younger baby with an enormous corn-meal poultice plastered over its front fontanelle, because, as the mother explained, the membrane covering the opening in the skull had sunk in, so the midwife had to come every day and prise it up, from the roof of the child's mouth, and apply a fresh poultice frequently, to suck it up from the top, thus applying both *vis a tergo* and *vis a fronte*, as otherwise the child would suffer severely from—diarrhoea! The wonder is, not that the Maya are a rapidly disappearing race, owing to the heavy infantile mortality amongst them, but that any of the wretched infants survive at all. I took a photograph of five of the school-children, all of pronounced Maya

type. They were very good, and stood without a move or a murmur in the sun for ten or twelve minutes while I was taking them, but the way their faces lit up at sight of the toffee which came afterwards as a reward, showed that these poor pathetic little atoms of a vanishing race still retained a few of the attributes of the human kid. The schoolmaster of the village, a very intelligent man, was a black Carib from the sea coast—a strange coincidence that children whose ancestors must have looked upon him as the veriest barbarians, while they themselves represented the highest aboriginal culture ever reached in the New World, should now be taught English by him in a British colony. One could not but ponder the slow rise and fall of nations and civilisations, and incidentally the boundlessness of the British Empire, under whose beneficent sway the lowest and most degraded of the aboriginal American tribes, whose name was associated amongst the *conquistadores* with cannibalism and other degrading practices, has been turned into a nation of productive workers and good citizens, while the Maya, who enjoyed the highest civilisation in America before the Conquest, have, under the Spanish yoke, dwindled to a poor degenerate remnant of a once great nation, their traditions lost, their civilisation forgotten, their numbers decreasing year by year, till, in another century, it is probable that no single individual of pure Maya descent will be left upon the American continent.

On returning from Succots that evening I found a great black hornet busily engaged in prospecting the earth floor of the tent for a location to build his nest. I beat a hasty retreat till he had finished his survey, for they are probably the most dangerous insects in Central America to tackle, as, if one swats them and misses—a very easy thing to do, for they are quick as a striking snake—they do not retreat,

but promptly go for one, and their sting is as severe as that of a small snake. Later in the evening I killed the largest scorpion I have ever seen, nearly six inches long, crawling around the edge of the tent, and hoped that none of his relatives were secreted amongst the innumerable boxes, saddlebags, boots, and clothes cluttering the tent, and especially under my mosquito net.

CHAPTER V

Visit to newly-discovered ruins—A curious method of cutting a track through the bush—A profiteering dug-out owner—His downfall—The North Plaza—Small mound of the last occupants of the ruins—The chicle-bleeders' irresponsible, care-free life—Girls who elope to the bush—Tomagoff at new ruins—Bleeding by Indian doctor—A fortified position, and its probable age—Men afraid to attack tomagoff—Umbrella ants enormous nest—Mysterious behaviour of snake—The men's superstition—Naming the ruins Actuncan—Description of main temple—Excavation in mounds round the temple—Work at Xunantunich ends—Transferring the death god—Chiapa Chu's farewell—The *Alcalde* at Succots—Reception of the god of death in the village—An uneasy night—Interest in my habits of natives of Succots—Various branches of Maya and other aborigines who have occupied Xunantunich over period of 4,000 years.

As none of the men would dig because it was Sunday, I determined to cut a path from Xunantunich to some entirely new ruins which had been recently found by the Indians, distant about two miles to the north. Though they strongly objected to digging, they had no objection whatever to cutting passes through the bush, and the only explanation I could get of this apparent inconsistency was that digging was considered work, and a breach of the fourth commandment, whereas felling bush was not. There was a track leading to them from Succots, but as this was a long way round and full of red bug, I decided to cut a trail of my own through the forest. Muddy, with two men, started early for the new ruins, while two were left with me. Muddy and his men, on arriving at their destination, started cutting a picado, or trail, through the bush in a general southerly direction, while my men, having given the others time to reach the ruins, cut in a general northerly direction towards

them. Both parties blew at frequent intervals on curious conical horns, made by twisting thick tough palm leaves into a cone, and blowing through the smaller end. The note may be varied by altering the diameter of the cone, and the extraordinary bleating noise which the horns make can be heard for miles through the bush on a calm day. They take the place, in fact, of the conch shell trumpets used by the Coast Indians and Caribs. In less than two hours both parties met, almost in the middle, having cut a nearly straight pass through two miles of bush, no mean feat when one considers the density of the undergrowth.

We had now twenty men reporting for work every day, and with them that morning came the Succots Indian who had hired me, for twenty-five cents daily, the dug-out in which the men crossed the river every morning. He now demanded one dollar per day, grounding his claim on the fact that whereas at first only a few men crossed, now twenty crossed daily, and it was useless to explain that the twenty-five cents was a flat rate for the use of the boat for about ten minutes every day, so it made no difference to him if a hundred men crossed in her. She was a crazy old craft, dug out of a wild cotton trunk, the softest and cheapest wood used for the purpose. When new she had been worth perhaps ten dollars, but now when one crossed the river in her she leaked through a dozen cracks, imperfectly caulked with pieces of tough bark, reinforced by fragments of old garments, and it was only by constant baling that the opposite side, perhaps fifty yards away, was reached. Five dollars would have been an extravagant price for her, and yet her owner demanded one dollar per day hire ! Even a war profiteering shipowner would have nothing to learn from these poor primitive Indians, who have bought their experience dearly from chicle contractors and Armenian store-keepers.

Fortunately for me another dug-out owner offered to lend me his boat for nothing, on which the profiteer volunteered, as a great concession, to keep to the original 25 cents, which offer I was delighted to be able to turn down. When we passed by a week later the old tub was sunk at her moorings, where she will probably remain till she rots.

Five men were sent to clear the new ruins of bush, and four to clear the North Plaza, and to open a small mound at its north-west corner. The North Plaza (S on the plan) on being cleared, proved to be a quadrangle 100ft. square, almost exactly orientated, and bounded on the north, south, east and west sides by long narrow mounds, between the ends of which openings existed giving access to the central square. The mound on the south side (N on the plan) was 12ft. high and 27ft. wide. The mound on the west (O on the plan) was 22ft. high and 25ft. wide. Neither of these mounds had stone buildings on their summits, though it is probable that wooden temples or priests' dwellings existed there originally, as they are not of the usual type of burial mounds. The mound on the east side (P on the plan) was 20ft. high and 30ft. wide. The mound on the north side (R on the plan) was 33ft. high and 40ft. wide. This latter was very steep, and was constructed throughout of large blocks of limestone. Upon both P and R were the ruins of long narrow stone buildings, that upon R being much the larger of the two. At the north-west and south-east corners of the *plaza* respectively, were two small conical mounds (T and T¹ on the plan), one of which, T, was opened. This mound was circular, pyramidal in shape, 4ft. high at the centre, and 18ft. in diameter. An excavation 6ft. across was made through its centre to the ground level. It was composed of earth and blocks of limestone, and contained nothing beyond a

very rude, poorly fashioned rubbing stone for grinding corn, and numerous fragments of coarse red pottery. The discovery of so crude a little mound in such an important spot as this *plaza* must have been was very interesting, for there can, I think, be no doubt that it dated from a period long after the abandonment of the ruins by their original builders. The former floor of the *plaza* was 12ft. above the level of the ground outside, and was covered with a layer of cement made from small blocks of limestone embedded in mortar ; on top of this cement layer a covering of vegetal humus several inches thick had accumulated, and it was on this layer of undisturbed humus that the small mound had been constructed, a sure indication that many centuries must have elapsed between the desertion of the *plaza* and the erection of the small mound. Comparing the thickness of the humus layer beneath the mound with that on the main *plaza*, one would be led to believe that not over two centuries had elapsed since the mound was constructed.

One of the men who had worked with me for a few days when I first arrived passed through camp that morning on his way to the chicle bush. He had four or five months' killing labour to look forward to, sleeping under a palm-leaf shelter, hardly ever dry, with nothing but corn cake and beans to eat, yet he was as cheerful as a lark, and full of chaff for my other men who had not the enterprise to leave home, brave the hardships of the bush, and take the chance of making big money or nothing at all. The *mulada*, or mule train, to which he belonged, had left three days previously on its eight days' journey into the heart of Central American bush, but he had been unable to tear himself away from the señoritas, the *vino del país*—wine of the country, or white rum—and the fascinating games of

chingalingo and *parapinto* provided in the village of Benque Viejo. He had started three times to follow the mule train, but the attractions of Benque had each time drawn him back at night ; now, however, if he were to catch the *mulada* at all, he was really obliged to go, as he would have to cover in five days the distance they had travelled in eight. His luggage consisted of a small shot bag, slung over his shoulder, and a guitar in a waterproof cover, carried in his arms with more care and solicitude than if it had been a baby. But this guitar was to him what his harp was to the wandering minstrel—the price of many a meal, many a cigarette, and many a drink of rum round the chicle camp fire, under the flimsy palm-leaf shelter, with the ping of the mosquito, the quack of the tree frog, and the howl of the jaguar, the only other sounds to break the silence of the bush by night.

Chicleros are extraordinarily improvident, and swayed solely by the whim of the moment. One frequently passes chicle camps, in which their owners, after the season is over had left behind such articles as guitars, pots and pans, crockery, spurs, lamps, food, and even blankets and hammocks, not wishing to be encumbered with these in their mad rush back to the dissipations of semi-civilisation, perhaps four or five long days' tramp through the bush. They are great gamblers, and having no other stakes available in the bush, play for blocks of chicle, using the fragments left over in trimming each block as small change. Recently Indian and Mestizo girls have taken to accompanying the men into camp, and it is no uncommon thing to find a mother bemoaning the loss of her daughter who has eloped with some gallant chiclero to the bush. Once the girls have got into the habit of this free untrammelled life, they find it almost impossible to break, getting ready

as each season comes round to accompany their chiclero—though rarely the same one for two consecutive seasons—back to the wild.

The men clearing the new ruins returned that evening, and reported that on the summit of the main temple they had found a small fallen-in chamber from which they had disturbed a large yellow-jawed tomagoff, one of the most poisonous snakes in the bush, and that on seeing them he had made off and taken refuge in a hole in the wall of the temple about half-way up. I told them to be sure and kill him next day if he returned.

Later in the day I witnessed the method of bleeding employed by the Indians, a favourite remedy amongst them for headaches and fevers. The patient sits down, and the doctor standing by his side, with a little obsidian knife (if this is not obtainable a splinter of glass or a snake's tooth will do) opens the temporal vein, holding the head steady with his left hand, while an assistant catches the blood in a small calabash. When the doctor thinks sufficient blood has flowed, he binds on tightly a pad of raw cotton, to stop the haemorrhage.

When visiting Succots I had noticed, close to the river margin, one of those combined forts and look-out mounds so common throughout this section of the Maya area. It consisted of a steep conical mound, 25ft. high, filling one side of a square, or *plaza*, 40 yds. in diameter, which was bounded on the remaining three sides by ramparts 8ft. high, between which were left four entrances to the square. The whole stood on a high bluff 40 yds. from the river bank, and must have formed an exceedingly strong position to hold against people armed only with spears and bows and arrows. We know from writers at the time of the Conquest that the lofty mounds always found in these forts were

used as look-out mounds, from which the approach of an enemy could be observed for many miles, and due warning of it given to the people living around the fort, who herded the women, children, old people, and animals into the fortified *plaza*, where they could be more readily defended by the warriors. I took five men from Xunantunich to dig in the highest mound of the fort. On making an excavation through its centre, it was found to be composed entirely of large blocks of limestone, the interstices between which were filled in with limestone dust and earth. Nothing was found in it, except a number of fragments of crude red and grey pottery. The ramparts were composed of exactly the same material. Occasionally these look-out mounds were used secondarily as burial places, but this was evidently not so in the present case. The exact date of these forts in this part of the Maya area is difficult to fix, but they probably belong to a period intermediate between the Old Empire occupation, as represented by the temple and large mounds at Xunantunich, and the degenerate population who occupied the country a century or two before the Spanish Conquest, who constructed such crude mounds as that excavated in the small *plaza* at the ruins, of which great numbers are to be found scattered throughout the surrounding country.

The weather continued extraordinarily damp, and though I kept the tent well opened up every day when it was not actually raining, yet valises, shoes, and other leather articles grew whiskers of green mildew in a night, while guns, razor blades, and scissors rusted over in no time. Everything felt damp and soggy, and the heavy drip drip of water night and day upon the tent, if not from mist or rain, then from heavy dew upon the trees, grew very monotonous. Nearly every morning a dense mist enshrouded the whole hill-top

upon which the ruins stand, often lasting till midday, and this has given rise to a tradition amongst the modern Indians that the ancient people are offering the incense of burning copal to their old gods, the smoke of which can be seen from Succots hanging around the ruins. The men on the new ruins returned in the evening, and reported that they had encountered the same snake coiled up in exactly the same room, and that he had again escaped them by seeking refuge in the hole in the temple wall. I asked why they had not macheted him, and they said he was too quick, but I could see that they had been afraid to attack a tomagoff of this size with a machete, for he was said to be over 6ft. long, nor could I blame them for not doing what I should certainly have hesitated to do myself.

I started the next day with three extra men for the new ruins, carrying a gun, in hopes of getting a shot at the snake. Along the road cut by the men were numbers of small elevations, probably Maya sepulchral mounds belonging to their degenerate latest period. About midway we crossed a little stream which had cut itself a deep bed in the clay soil ; along the steep banks of this we picked up numerous pieces of pottery, some of painted ware belonging to the best period, others of coarse domestic ware ; flint and obsidian chips, pieces of shell, and other indestructible rubbish left by the former inhabitants. Near the stream we found the ruin of a small house built of squared stones, but so little of the walls were left that it was impossible to tell whether it was pre-Columbian or dated from after the Spanish Conquest. Close to this ruin we passed the largest umbrella ants' nest I had ever seen ; it was 25ft. long by 2½ft. high. From it sunk highways 8in. wide branched out in various directions ; these split up into smaller and smaller arteries, spreading out into the surrounding bush

for hundreds of yards, their floors smooth as porcelain, and with every particle of vegetation cleared off them. The name "umbrella ant" is rather a misnomer, for if a heavy downpour of rain comes on while they are working, they drop their little rectangles of leaf, and make a bee line for the nest, leaving their "umbrellas" littered over the runways till the sun shines again, when they come back and fetch them. They should, in fact, rather be called "parasol" than "umbrella" ants. Once the pieces of leaf have been brought into the nest they are taken charge of by workers who, with their mandibles, chew them up into a pulp, of which they make tiny balls, rolling these up by means of their legs and mandibles. These balls are stacked by the side of fungus beds within the nest, and smoothed over. Upon this smoothed surface are planted pieces of fungus from the old beds, and in a couple of days they are covered with a uniform snowy white fungus layer upon which the ants feed.

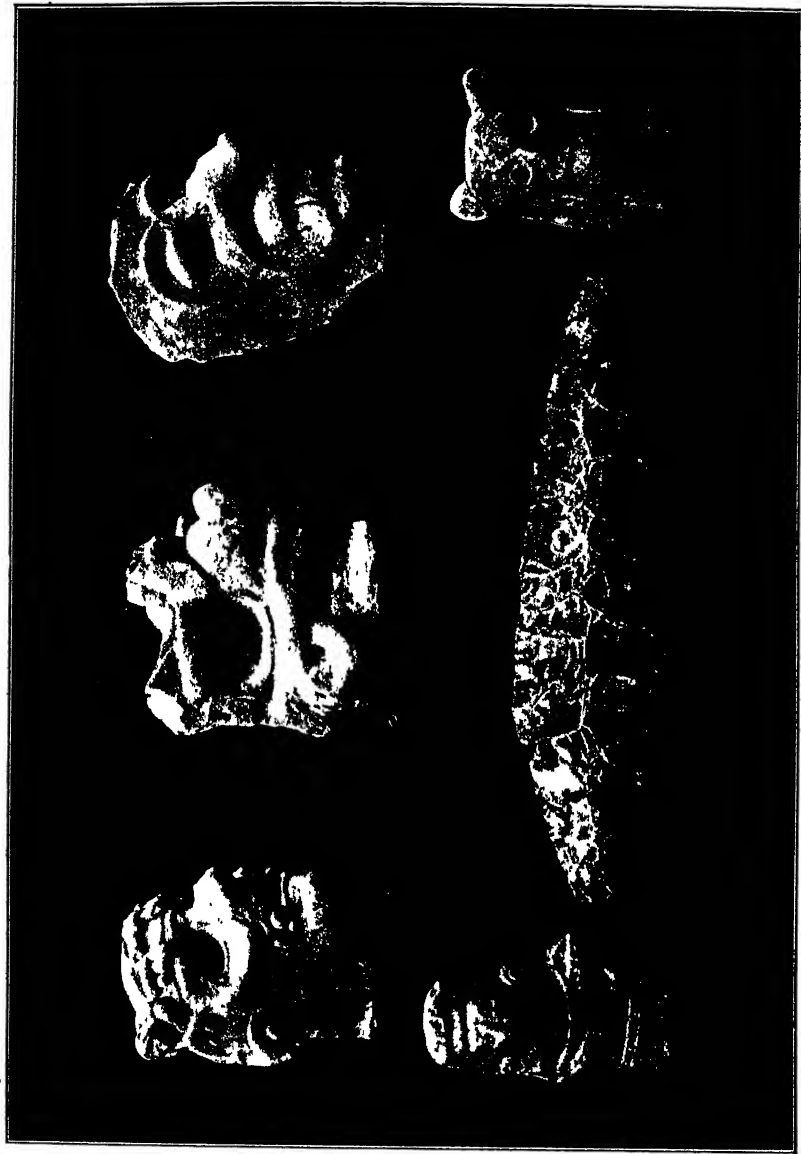
On arriving at the ruins, which stood on the summit of a small natural hill, I enquired first after the snake, and was informed that he had again been turned out of his quarters on top of the temple, and had taken refuge in its interior, through the aperture in the back wall. Going round to the rear of the temple, I could just see his head projecting from a hole about half way up the perpendicular side of the building, but not in such a position as to make a shot at him easy. On climbing along the right base of the temple, however, an excellent shot was obtained, and his snakeship's head almost completely blown off. He proved to be 6ft. 6in. long, a most unusual size for a yellow-jawed tomagoff. The really remarkable thing was, however, why a snake of this species should return for three consecutive days to a locality where he had been so persistently

disturbed by the noise of men chopping trees and bush, throwing down stones, and excavating where man had probably not trod for thirteen centuries. If it had been a woula, the local variety of constrictor, one would not have been in the least surprised, as these snakes, once they have taken up their quarters anywhere, return there persistently, and are very hard to get rid of. A tomagoff, on the other hand, is a very shy snake, and seldom returns to a place once he has been disturbed. His hole of refuge led to one of the buried chambers of the temple, which no doubt—from his point of view furnished an ideal den—warm, water-proof, and carpeted with soft impalpable dust ; which may have been his reason for so strongly objecting to eviction proceedings. Of course, the men's theory was that he was an incarnation of the old serpent deity, returned to take up his quarters in the temple once dedicated to his worship, and I could not help thinking that it was partly on this account that they were so loth to tackle him. In his memory I named the site " Actuncan," or Snake's Cave.

The Actuncan ruins consisted of a single main temple, facing west, standing upon a mound 40ft. high. The total height from the ground level to the summit of the temple, before the upper storey fell, had been approximately 75ft. The façade of the temple was 28ft. broad, and flanked on each side by wings, each 15ft. broad by 10ft. high. In front of it stretched a terrace 84ft. broad by 15ft. deep, approached by a flight of stone steps leading from the ground level, now completely in ruins. The temple contained originally three storeys, but the uppermost had entirely fallen, and the chambers of the two lower storeys, at least four in number, have been completely closed in by the fall of the roof comb and the greater part of the top storey. The walls are so thick, and such an immense

amount of débris has fallen upon them from the summit of the temple, that it would be no light task to open up these rooms. Moreover, the results would not reward one for the trouble expended, as the probabilities are that the lowest storey would, as in the case of Xunantunich, be found to be filled with masonry, forming a solid foundation for the two upper storeys, while the middle-storey rooms, in one of which the snake took refuge, are hardly likely to contain any objects of interest or value, as these would naturally have been removed by the priests when they finally deserted the temple.

Facing the great stairways, and at a distance of 30ft. from its base, stands a round pillar, or altar, cut from a mass of conglomerate, 2ft. high and 4ft. in diameter, and directly behind this the fragments of a broken unsculptured stela made from rather soft limestone. Thirty feet from the south-west angle of the main temple is a small oval mound, 60ft. in its greatest diameter ; it is surmounted by three smaller mounds, the largest of which is in the centre, with a smaller one at each extremity. These nipple-like projections were found to be composed almost entirely of flint cores, and it was thought possible that, like Mound B at Xunantunich, this also was a burial mound. On opening it, however, to the ground level, nothing was found beyond fragments of pottery, some rough, coarse, domestic ware, others of fine painted and polished ware, together with a few pieces of those crude clay incense-burners, decorated externally with the figure of a god done in *appliqué* work, which belong to the last Maya civilisation. Close to the north-west angle of the large temple mound was a small pyramid, upon the summit of which stood the ruins of a one-storeyed stone structure, now completely in ruins. Actuncan is clearly visible from Xunantunich, and vice versa, and



HEADS FROM THE RUINS. 3 IS TLALOC, MEXICAN GOD OF RAIN. 4, 6, FROM NARANJO,
NEAREST RUINED MAYA CITY TO BENQUE VIEJO

between them they dominate the intervening valley ; it is probable, indeed, that they form units in a group of temples all belonging to a single city which occupied this valley, and the low surrounding hills, during the later days of the Old Empire.

Work was continued both at Actuncan and Xunantunich till mid-December when, greatly against my inclination, I had to break camp, as Christmas was approaching, and the rains were very bad. Work, however, will be resumed at both places next season.

The altar stone which stood in front of the principal stela, and upon which was sculptured in low relief a representation of the god of death facing several columns of glyphs, had been trimmed down with a stone saw till it weighed about 180lbs.; the problem then arose how to get it across the mile and a half to the river bank, over a road all up and down hill, and slippery with greasy mud. Ascuncion Cowoj, (pronounced Cow-Oh) the strongest of the Indians, volunteered to carry it down in his macapaal, a net made of henequen fibre slung over the back, and suspended by a strap to the forehead, in which the Indian can carry all his worldly belongings (with the exception of his wife and dog, who follow humbly behind) when moving house in the bush, which he frequently does.

It required four men to raise the stone in the macapaal to his back, but once there he staggered off manfully with it, and the kick of three glasses of rum which he had imbibed before starting just lasting him to the river bank, deposited it safely in the dug-out for transport to the village of Succots, where the *Alcalde* had prepared the Cabildo for our reception that night. For thirteen centuries this melancholy figure of the Maya death god had been looking out over the immemorial bush, crouched on one knee, with bent skeleton

head, bare ribs, and one long bony arm raised as if in exhortation. In front of him was a double row of hieroglyphics, no doubt explaining the whole situation, but owing to the weathering of the stone these had, except for the outline of the cartouches, become almost entirely obliterated, and were not considered worth removing. Our camp outfit was split up into twenty-five loads, and carried to the water side, where we all embarked in dug-outs. Before leaving the ruins all the cargadores, or carriers, were given a good shot of rum to help them on their way, and Muddy asked Chiapa Chi, half in jest, if she would like one also. "*Pues señor,*" she answered, "*tengo dolor de la cabeza, del muelar, y de la bariga, y yo creo que talvez un tragito me aliviare*" ("I have headache, toothache, and pain in the stomach, and I believe that perhaps a little drink would relieve me"), on which she took a good three fingers of the rum, and slinging on her macapaal, full of empty tins and bottles which she had "snaffled" on the break-up of camp, she started gaily off with the procession of cargadores.

The Cabildo at Succots proved to be an immense room with adobe walls, palm-leaf roof, and mud floor, in which the *Alcalde* usually dispensed minor justice, though in a way his power was greater even than that of the High Court, for he had jurisdiction over all sorts of domestic matters, could compel an erring wife to return to her husband, or vice versa, and arranged with neatness and dispatch all sorts of quarrels regarding the trespass of one Indian's pigs in another's corn plantation, and the slaughter of the pigs by the owner of the plantation, most fruitful sources of dispute amongst the Indians. As they have themselves elected him to office, which he holds for a year, they never kick against his judgments. A rumour had got around the village that I was bringing back with me the original Xunantunich, or

stone maiden, after whom the ruins were called, and a great crowd was consequently collected in the Cabildo to meet us, including the first and second *Alcaldes*, native constables, and crowds of children. They were rather disappointed at the appearance of the god of death, but old Urbano Patt, who had joined the crowd, consoled them by remarking that though they seldom saw a virgin in Succots, they had never seen a god. With difficulty I managed to clear the room about 9 p.m., and get undressed, but sleep was impossible, as for a couple of hours I had to endure a serenade outside from two performers on a *marimba*, or native xylophone; after this the village dogs, who had been thoroughly aroused by the unusual disturbance, yelped and barked till the early hours of the morning, while most of the village pigs which apparently had their sleeping quarters beneath the projecting eaves of the Cabildo, grunted and squealed in sympathy. About 5 a.m. the bell of a little adobe chapel next door to the Cabildo began to tinkle a call to the faithful to mass, and this appeared to be a signal for the commencement of a procession of sightseers, who dribbled in by twos and threes to see the various objects taken from the ruins, but were much more intrigued by our curious manners and customs. The sharpening of a safety-razor blade, the preparation of coffee in a percolator, and my bath taken in a large calabash of water, were all side shows greatly appreciated by the admiring crowds. The sick of the village, no matter how chronic or long-standing their complaints, hearing there was a medico available, also began to arrive for treatment.

Next day we started back to Benque Viejo, and thence to Cayo.

We have already seen that the latest monolith at Xunantunich dates from January 31st, 590, according to Spinden's correlation, and that the ruins were occupied for a period

of 100 to 140 years prior to this, forming an offshoot, or colony, from the much larger adjacent city of Naranjo. The neighbourhood of Xunantunich was, however, probably occupied many centuries before this date, as in constructing a path from Succots to Benque Viejo along the western branch of the Mopan river, two very crude figurines of greenstone were discovered buried in the sand and gravel along what had originally been the bed of the river. Both these were typical specimens of archaic figurines, the prominent eyes surrounded by a ridge, and the crude outlining in incised lines of the upper and lower limbs and fingers and toes on the greenstone of which the figurines were composed, being characteristically archaic. But the archaic was a highland civilisation which flourished from Mexico to the Andes some 2000 years B.C.; how then do these specimens come to be embedded in the river-drift near Xunantunich? This is one of those many mysteries of Central America which nothing but intensive work in this field can solve. But if the neighbourhood of Xunantunich was occupied many centuries prior to A.D. 590, it was also occupied by other branches of the Maya many centuries after that date. The first of these probably consisted of wandering members of the Maya Quichè from Guatemala, traces of whom have as yet only been found in the form of very peculiar incense-burners discovered in a cave near Benque Viejo, which seem to belong to the Maya Quichè culture. After these, or possibly contemporaneous with them, were Peten Itzas, who spread over in this direction from their island Kingdom of Peten in Guatemala, probably at a very early date, and built the vast numbers of burial mounds and earthworks found throughout this district. These were the Indians whom the Spaniards found in possession at the time of the Conquest, and they were the makers of the innumerable



INCENSE-BURNER OF LATE MAYA PERIOD

pots, idols, whistles, spindle whorls, and incensarios of clay, flint and obsidian axe, spear, and arrow-heads, and beads of shell, greenstone, and mother-of-pearl, found in great abundance along the valley of the Mopan river, and they were the ancestors of the inhabitants of the British Honduras Indian villages of to-day. The valley of the Western Branch is extraordinarily fertile, and gives splendid crops of maize, the staple food of the Indian, hence the popularity of this district amongst the aboriginal inhabitants, which has caused it to be intermittently occupied for a period of perhaps nearly 4,000 years and continuously for 1,500.

CHAPTER VI

Secrecy of Indians over location of their villages in dense bush—An unreliable interpreter—A bad road—Gold!—Arrival in Chorro—Child carried off by jaguar—We sit up for the jaguar, and get him with a lure—Dangerous sleeping quarters—Curious Indian superstitions—Personal appearance of the devil—An immoral suggestion—Leave Chorro for Yalbac—A sinister piece of bush—Disappearance of Bernardino Coh, an Indian—Vanished without signs of a struggle in little forest glade—Disappearance of Sergeant Bascombe, also vanished in a forest glade, leaving mule and accoutrements behind, and is never again seen—Attack by the Chichenha Indians—Disappearance of Mr. Rhys.

FROM Cayo, on my first visit, I determined to visit some of the remoter Indian settlements in the bush, where a white man was seldom, or never seen, and for this purpose chose first the villages of Chorro and Yalbac. The Indians, especially in the Spanish-American republics, take every possible precaution to hide their villages, concealing them in the depths of the bush, where they are almost impossible to find. This instinct is doubtless due to a survival of that old terror, a heritage from Spanish colonial days, when every Indian was an outlaw and fugitive from the face of the white man, endeavouring to conceal his poor hut in the most inaccessible fastnesses of forest or mountain, and, when discovered and routed out, fighting to the last with the ferocity of a savage animal brought to bay, in defence of his family and his freedom. Though the Indians of British Honduras have received nothing but encouragement and kind treatment at the hands of the local Government, old instincts die hard, and they are still averse to visits from the white man

to their villages. To prevent such the approaches are made as narrow and inconspicuous as possible, and as Indians always walk in single file, and use no mode of conveyance for goods except their own backs, this is easily accomplished. On riding through the bush one will sometimes strike a little narrow, inconspicuous track which looks as if it had been made by game visiting a water-hole, but if followed up will be found to lead to a settlement of considerable size. The villages are literally buried in the bush, the densest parts of which are chosen, and only just so much cleared as will accommodate the houses, the forest growing right up to the back yard. All round the settlement is a labyrinth of paths, amongst which the stranger may wander up and down and in and out for hours, the last place he is likely to arrive at being the village. Meanwhile he has been thoroughly inspected, and should the Indians have reason to think that his mission is undesirable, he will find empty huts and a deserted village.

Accompanied by a Mestiso interpreter, I set out on horse-back one fine morning for the village of Chorro, which, being only thirty miles distant from Cayo, we hoped to reach in the course of the afternoon. The interpreter was a little insignificant, stoop-shoulder, Spanish-Indian Mestiso ; his face, a greasy orange yellow, was covered with perhaps a hundred long, black, coarse hairs, sparsely distributed where his beard and whiskers should have been. His hair, long and unkempt, fell in a cascade over his eyes, from which it had to be extricated every few minutes by a sharp backward fling of the head. His hands were filthy, and his eyes, prominent, bilious yellow in colour, and shifty, were nature's signal of a thoroughly untrustworthy rogue. I was told that he was a drunkard, a liar, and would think no more of sticking a knife in me, if it should be worth his while, than

of killing a pig ; but he was the best interpreter in the district, speaking Maya, Spanish, and English equally fluently and ungrammatically, and having a way with the Indians which would with unerring instinct worm out the best obtainable in the way of food and lodging, and bring to light any *ubaloob uxben uincoob*, or things belonging to the ancient people, that they had found in the bush, or in digging in their *milpas*, or corn plantations.

The track at first passed through a stretch of *uameil*, or land upon which corn had been planted within the last few years, but was now covered with a dense, low scrub ; after this we crossed a rice swamp, and then began gradually to ascend towards a pass between two peaks of what are known as the Chorro Hills, through which we had to make our way in order to reach the village. This pass is nothing more nor less than the dry bed of a stream, which, covered as it is with boulders and water-worn pebbles of all sizes, makes an uncommonly bad road for riding. I was told that during the wet season the pass is filled by a swiftly-running mountain torrent, and that it is only possible to reach the village on horseback during a few months at the end of the dry season. Several times I noticed glittering points on the surface of rocks we passed, but did not take the trouble to dismount and examine them, as I took them to be iron pyrites or crystals of mica glittering in the sun ; but when the interpreter told me casually that a nugget of gold as big as a small black bean had been picked up recently by an Indian in the bed of the stream I was on the *qui vive*, and got down to examine more closely the next glittering points I saw. Sure enough, they proved to be tiny specks of gold no bigger than a pin's point, but still what miners call " colour," and conclusive proof of the presence of the precious metal, though whether in sufficient quantities to

make it worth while working I am unable to say. I noticed that it was only in certain stones, which I took to be quartz, that the specks of gold were visible; the great majority of the pebbles, with the rocky bed of the stream itself, were of limestone formation, and quite free from any traces of the metal, from which I judged that the gold-bearing pebbles had been washed down from a different formation higher up the stream. We soon reached the summit of the pass, and began to descend, arriving after about five miles of the usual bush track, in Chorro, a small, exclusively Maya village, containing from forty to fifty huts. We found considerable excitement in the settlement as a baby had been missed that same morning, and a search-party formed by the men when they returned from work in their corn plantations in the afternoon. The remains of the child—a little girl perhaps two years of age—were discovered about a quarter of a mile from the village, and a truly ghastly spectacle they presented, hardly anything but the gnawed, bloody bones and scraps of cartilage being left. The poor little thing had evidently wandered out, while her mother was busy washing clothes, to the edge of the bush, where she was seized, carried off, and devoured by a jaguar, which was probably on the look-out for a stray pig from the village. The Indians, feeling sure the jaguar would return, tied up a small porker as a lure for him just within the edge of the bush, while the child's father and myself sat with our guns loaded with buck-shot on a platform of sticks erected in the lower branches of a great ceiba-tree, within easy shot of the pig. The first night we sat, or rather squatted, in an extremely constrained and uncomfortable position, unable either to talk or smoke, till nearly 2 a.m., when I gave it up as a bad job, and retired to bed, though the child's father

stopped on till sunrise. On the next night, however, we had hardly taken up our positions on the platform for an hour when the pig began to squeal and pull hard on his picket rope, evidently in mortal terror. Beneath the cieba-tree the bush was comparatively clear, and we could distinctly make out, in the bright moonlight, a dark shadow slowly creeping round the edge of the clearing towards the pig. We fired simultaneously, and the noise of the reports was followed immediately by the sound of the animal crashing his way through the bush. We both felt sure we had hit the brute, but neither of us had the least inclination to follow him up by moonlight. Next morning we found blood on the ground in the clearing, and, following this into the bush, where it was plentifully smeared on the leaves of the undergrowth, and lay in gouts upon the ground, we came upon the jaguar stone dead, not a hundred yards from where he had been shot. He was a magnificent animal, and I had his skin tanned by a local moccasin-maker and made into a rug, though its beauty was somewhat marred by having been riddled with buckshot holes over the head and one shoulder.

I found it very difficult to obtain quarters for myself and the interpreter in the village, as all the huts were already overcrowded; he at length discovered a nice, clean little hut, occupied only by a young widow named Petronilla Can (Petronilla Snake in Maya), generally called by the Maya diminutive Xpet, who agreed to take us in and feed us for the few days we remained in the village. She gave me a remarkably comfortable cuhoon palm-leaf bed, and made a shake-down out of the same leaves for the interpreter on the floor, retiring herself to sleep in a little cubby-hole, screened off from the *sala* by a wall of upright sticks. I had been up after the jaguar the greater

part of the first night, and made up for lost time by sleeping most of the following day, but on the second day I noticed that she seemed very miserable, and her nose and eyes were red, evidently from crying, so I enquired what was wrong. It appeared that her husband had died of small-pox the day before we arrived, and, moreover, had died on the very bed, and covered with the same blanket, that I had used. I tried to rub in the criminal carelessness of her conduct in letting me sleep in an infected bed, under an infected blanket, but she was so thoroughly a fatalist that I had to give it up as hopeless, and, having seen the bed and bedding burnt, we took up our quarters in a little bush chapel, which was really the most comfortable building in the place. This poor widow had come with her husband quite recently about twenty miles across the Guatemala border, from a village which had been decimated by small-pox, hoping to escape the infection—her fatalism evidently extending only to those in whom she had no special interest—but a few days after their arrival the husband was stricken with the disease, and in less than a week was dead. The Chorro people, I feel sure, did not realise the danger of the infection, or they would never have allowed the couple to settle in their village, and it would have been well for them had they not done so, for shortly after the death of the man the disease spread through the village and carried off a number of the population, hardly a house but was left mourning the loss of some member of the family.

These Indians are intensely superstitious, and believe firmly in Xtabai, or evil spirits, in the form of beautiful women, who lure hunters on to follow them in the bush, and then murder them; in the *pishan*, or souls of the dead, who at certain times of the year are permitted to return to

the scene of their former existence, in the Galatea-like coming to life of those dwarfish clay figures of the ancient gods found decorating the outer surfaces of incense-burners, which they sometimes dig up, and which I have been assured by more than one Indian he had seen dancing in the moonlight ; and, lastly, in the existence, and occasional appearance of, a personal devil of the orthodox kind. I determined to test this belief in the last, and, with the aid of Velasquez, obtained a large round calabash, which I hollowed out, and cut eye-holes, a mouth, and a nose in the shell. Fixing this on a stick, and placing a candle inside, I drew a little cotton blanket round the stick and myself, so that it looked like a ghastly white figure seven feet high, with fiery eyes, nose, and mouth. I may say I borrowed the idea from my schooldays, using a calabash, as no turnip was available. The Indians are in the habit of squatting about in the streets after their work is done, gossiping about the maize crop, the scarcity of game, the iniquities of the *Alcalde*—in fact, very much the same subjects as interest more civilised people. I knew, therefore, that my best time would be about eight o'clock, for the moon had not yet risen ~~then~~, and it was not late enough for them to have retired indoors for the night. When everything was ready, I sallied forth from the back of the little chapel and stalked slowly and majestically down the street. Nobody saw whence I came, and, for all they knew, I might have descended from above, or more probably ascended from below. They did not stop to enquire, but bolted into their houses as if the devil were after them. Down the front street and up the back street I went ; people everywhere flying from me in terror, children howling, women screaming, and men blocking up the door behind them to keep out the devil. I managed to get back to the chapel unobserved, and was

greatly interested the following day in getting detailed accounts of the personal appearance of the devil from various eye-witnesses, no two of which were alike. Next morning Valesquez appeared after breakfast looking somewhat abashed and sheepish, quite a new rôle for him. He intimated he had something important to say, so I bade him go ahead.

"Well, señor," he said, "you have found Xpet a good cook, is it not so?"

"Quite true," I replied.

"And clean?"

"And clean also," I admitted.

"And she is still young, and for an Indian not so bad-looking?"

"That also," I admitted, beginning to see which way the cat was about to jump.

"Señor," he continued, "there are in this village more women than men, and, saddened though she is at the loss of her husband, the girl feels she should have a man to take care of her. Will you take her back to Cayo to cook for you?"

"José," I said, "you have the morals of a monkey; but worse, you are a fool, for what should I do with an Indian girl, however beautiful and clean, and skilled in making corn cake, when I leave the district?"

"True, Señor Doctor, I never thought of that; but would there be any objection to Xpet accompanying *me* back to Cayo?"

"José," I replied, "if I hear one more word about the *viudita* (little widow) you return to-day to Cayo, and on foot."

We left Chorro about noon, after visiting a few last sick people, waving a farewell to the whole population, who came

to their doors to see us off. The distance to Yalbac was only about twelve miles along a bush trail, and this we expected to make in less than two hours.

The little section of bush which we now traversed has a somewhat sinister reputation. It is roughly triangular in shape and bounded by the villages of San Pedro, Yalbac, and Chorro. It is not particularly thick bush, and, one side of the triangle being bounded by the river and the other two by fairly well-beaten trails, one would imagine that anyone finding their way into it would not have the slightest difficulty in getting out again; and yet within a few years no less than three persons have unaccountably and mysteriously disappeared here, and never been heard of again. Bernardino Coh, an Indian boy of about seventeen, set out early one April morning with his gun from his home in the little village of Santa Teresa for the double purposes of visiting some friends in Yalbac and shooting any game he might come across on the way. He stopped at the hut of a *compadre* in the village of San Pedro through which he had to pass, had breakfast there, and left about ten o'clock for Yalbac. He did not return to his father's home that night, as had been his intention when he started, but little anxiety was felt on this account, for it is no uncommon thing for an Indian to be absent two or three days hunting in the bush. When three days passed, however, and he had not returned, his father began to feel somewhat anxious, and sent one of his other sons to ascertain whether Bernardino was spending the time with his friends, or had left them for a hunting trip in the bush. Arriving in Yalbac, the boy was informed that Bernardino had never turned up there at all, and promptly returned and reported to his father. The latter, now thoroughly alarmed, fearing that some accident must have happened to the lad while hunting,

at once set out with several neighbours to look for him. Their search naturally started along the trail from San Pedro to Yalbac, where the boy had last been seen, and they had not proceeded far along this when the quick eye of one of the Indians discovered a place where someone had recently forced a passage from the trail into the bush. Following this up for about a mile, they found the boy's shot-bag lying on the ground, still containing his caps, powder-horn, shot, matches, and a packet of corn husk cigarettes. Beyond this the trail was easily followed, as the boy seemed to have lurched drunkenly forward from side to side, trampling down the low bush and breaking many small branches. Suddenly it debouched into a little open glade such as one often finds in the forest, where the land is too poor to carry large trees, or even underbush, and only sour grass and a few scrubby bushes thrive. The trail, till it entered the glade, was plain and unmistakable, but there was no trace of anyone having walked through the sour grass, where a perfectly unmistakable track is always left, owing to the tough blades of grass being all pressed in one direction by passing feet ; there was no indication of anyone having left the little glade, no mark of a struggle, and—no sign of the boy. All the Indians in the neighbourhood searched the bush thoroughly all round for days, but from that day to this no tidings have ever been heard of the lad, who disappeared as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed him.

The next disappearance was that of the Sergeant in charge of the Constabulary at Cayo. This man—a full-blooded Jamaican negro named Bascombe—was of herculean proportions, and a match for three ordinary men. He started from Cayo one morning, accompanied by an interpreter, with a view to arresting a criminal in Yalbac, where

they arrived about 5 p.m., but, as the wanted man was not in the village, they determined to wait there till the following morning, all the more willingly, no doubt, as they heard there was a native dance and *fiesta* to be held that night, to which they were both invited. Early next morning the interpreter started back for Cayo, as his services were required that forenoon, but, as his man had not as yet turned up, the sergeant determined to wait till a little later in the day. The wanted man (who had probably been warned of his presence, and was hiding out in the bush till he had taken his departure) had not turned up by mid-day, so, not wishing to be overtaken by darkness on the road, Bascombe set out alone for Cayo, where the interpreter had meanwhile arrived, and informed the police that the sergeant would arrive later in the day. Evening came, but no Bascombe, and, as he had not turned up by the evening of the following day, a constable was sent out to see what was detaining him in Yalbac. This man ascertained from the villagers that Bascombe had left the place soon after noon on the day following his arrival. He next proceeded to San Pedro and Santa Teresa, villages through which the missing man should have passed on his way to Cayo, but at neither of these villages had he been seen on the day in question. Now thoroughly alarmed, the constable returned to Cayo and reported the facts. Search-parties, both of Constabulary and Indians, were at once organised, and a commencement was made at the road out of Yalbac, as it was there that Bascombe had last been seen. Less than a mile along this road a broad trail was found where someone riding mule-back had left the path, and forced a passage through the bush. This track was easily followed, and a few hundred yards down it Bascombe's mule was found picketed, and quietly grazing on

the underbush. Bascombe's trail was then followed from the point where he had dismounted, and his machete and leather belt were seen lying on the ground. A little farther on his revolver, in its leather case, was picked up, and lastly the broad felt uniform hat which he had been wearing when last seen. The trail extended a little farther, then, as in the case of Bernardino, it ended in a small open glade, which showed no signs of a struggle, or of the missing man, and out of which no other trail could be traced into the bush. Large rewards were offered for any information as to the fate of Bascombe, and the whole surrounding country was literally raked with a fine toothcomb by constables, Indians, mahogany-cutters, and others, but no trace of the missing man has ever been discovered, nor has any solution of the mystery of his disappearance ever been forthcoming.

The third case of disappearance within this tract of bush was actually, in point of time, the first, and differs somewhat from the other two, in that the same element of mystery cannot be said to attach to it, though it presents certain rather strange features. Some years ago the Icaichè branch of the Chichenha Indians were making things very unpleasant for colonists on the northern and western frontiers of British Honduras, raiding unprotected and isolated mahogany and logwood camps, and stealing arms, money and provisions. These raids at last culminated in an attack in force upon Qualm Bank, a large mahogany camp, from which they carried off the manager and sixty labourers, for whose ransom they demanded the sum of three thousand dollars, which the Government of the colony had to pay. So troublesome did they at length become that several wood-cutters' "banks" and "works" adjacent to their territory had to be abandoned, and the Government determined to inflict upon them a salutary

chastisement. With this object in view they organised a mixed force of volunteers and regulars, the latter consisting of 143 men and 3 officers of the W.I.R. This force was accompanied by a Mr. Rhys as Civil Commissioner, and in December marched from Belize to San Pedro, then held by the Icaichè Indians, which they captured without resistance. The next day they marched out of San Pedro, and while halting for breakfast in the bush, without posting scouts (evidently underrating their opponents), the cry of "Indians!" was raised, and before they had time to make any preparations the Indians were upon them. At first the troops made some stand against the enemy, six of them being killed and sixteen wounded, but in the middle of the engagement Major Mackay, who was in charge of the expedition, ordered the retreat to be sounded. This was at first reluctantly obeyed by the men, but, when they realised that they had been deserted by their officers, panic seems to have seized them, and the retreat became a total rout. Curiously enough, the Indians took no advantage of the opportunity thus offered them, for instead of following up their defeated adversaries, whom they might practically have wiped out, they calmly took themselves off into the bush in the opposite direction. The troops, when the cry of "Indians!" was first raised, had been halted in a broad pass cut through the bush for trucking out mahogany to the river, and this was the last occasion upon which Mr. Rhys, the Civil Commissioner, was ever seen. He was an elderly man, in somewhat weak health, but he was very friendly with the Indians, having some Indian blood in his own veins on his mother's side—indeed, it was mainly on this account that he had been selected as Civil Commissioner to accompany the expedition, and treat with them, so that, even had he fallen into

their hands, they would undoubtedly have treated him kindly.

No hypothesis has, so far as I know, ever been put forward which would satisfactorily explain these three curious cases of disappearance. It has been suggested that Mr. Rhys, being elderly and not very strong, may have got lost in the bush, and not been able to find his party again, and that Sergeant Bascombe may have been killed by an enemy ; but, as I have before pointed out, this is but a small tract of bush, and difficult to lose oneself in, and if the sergeant had been the victim of an enemy, why were his revolver, accoutrements, and mule—all valuable possessions for an Indian—not taken? Furthermore, these explanations do not cover the case of Bernardino Coh.

CHAPTER VII

Arrival in Yalbac—A ten-year-old hunter—Indian arrives with tale of a cave in the bush containing antiquities—We visit the cave—Exquisite scenery—Discovery of centuries-old torches—Exploring the cave—Lost in the cave, without light—An image and altar in the cave—Discovery of great cache of pottery vessels—Indians' instinct for finding their way in the bush—A terrible accident—Surgery under difficulties—Hunting for mahogany-trees in the bush—Preparations for mahogany-cutting—Felling the trees, and getting the logs out of the bush—A "first log" party—A primitive feast—Relations become strained between the guests—Trouble arrives—A fight to the death with machetes between negro and Indian—A terrible wound—Convenient after-effects of head injury.

WE arrived at Yalbac about 3 p.m., and went straight to the home of the *Alcalde*—rather a superior dwelling for an Indian hut, the walls constructed of straight sticks, the roof thatched with huana, or palm-leaf, and the floor of nice clean, hard-beaten marl dust. Having unsaddled, we stretched out in henequen hammocks, always hospitably at the disposal of the wayfarer in every Indian hut. While we were talking, the *Alcalde's* little son, a boy of ten or twelve, came in with eight fine, fat, brown squirrels, which he had killed in the bush with his sling,—a small, oblong piece of deerskin with a long, thin string of flexible raw hide attached at each side. The ammunition consisted of smooth, water-worn pebbles from the bed of the adjacent creek. By means of a bribe of ten cents we got him to give us an exhibition of his skill, the target being a sour orange, placed on a post at a distance of about twelve yards. His aim was extraordinarily accurate, as he knocked it off nine times out of every ten shots, though how he managed to get the

active little squirrels through a screen of thick foliage puzzled me.

Later in the day an Indian turned up, and in the course of conversation mentioned that a couple of weeks previously, while hunting in the bush, close to the village of Benque Viejo, he had come across a cave, in which he had seen a number of pottery vessels lying on the floor, but, being afraid to enter himself, had not disturbed them. He was perfectly willing, however, if I wished it, to guide me to the place next day. Needless to say, I accepted his offer with alacrity, and told Velasquez, much to his disgust, to wake me at 3 a.m. next morning, in order that we might get an early start. After a hasty cup of parched maize coffee and a couple of tortillas we managed to get off about 4 a.m. The first part of our journey took us through flat country covered with high bush, till we reached the village of Benque Viejo, where, as there was no trail leading to the cave, we intended to leave our horses, and do the rest of the journey on foot. Notwithstanding our early start, it was so late when we arrived that it was hopeless to think of visiting the cave that day, so perforce we slept the night in the *cabildo*, and next morning at 5 a.m. set out on foot. The flat, bush-covered country soon began to give place to small hills, with here and there bare, rugged limestone cliffs, some fifty to a hundred feet in height. The bush also became much more open, the trees larger and farther apart, while everywhere great limestone boulders were strewn about. In the face of one of these cliffs, about twenty feet from the ground, our guide soon descried an opening which he thought must be the mouth of the cave he had discovered. Climbing the steep side of the cliff with no little difficulty, we arrived at the opening, and found that it formed the mouth of a cavern of whose extent we could not judge, as

beyond the few yards to which the sun's rays penetrated the interior was in impenetrable gloom. Our guide realised immediately he entered, that this was not the original cave, as no pottery lay on the floor at the entrance, but, as we were there and it looked interesting, I determined to explore, and leave the other till later.

The opening was rough and irregular, about fifteen feet square, and showed no signs of human workmanship. Standing a few yards within it and looking out, the scene was beautiful in the extreme. The exquisite tracery of bright green leaves, the gorgeous flowers of creepers and lianas which hung from above like a curtain over the entrance, outlined against a background of cloudless blue sky, the brightness of which was accentuated by the dark, rugged walls of the opening, which, as it were, framed the picture, made one imagine for a moment that one was gazing into fairyland, or on the transformation scene of a pantomime. I was sorry I had not brought my camera, though it could not have done justice to the colouring of the sky and foliage.

The floor of the cave was at first quite flat, and covered with a hard calcareous deposit which had dripped from the roof. Along the sides lay a thick deposit of bats' dung, and outside this a layer of small potsherds, which showed manifest signs of attrition by water. Whilst chipping idly in the deposit on the floor of the cave with my machete I brought to light three small polished beads of green jade, and one of reddish shell, which had been covered over by the calcareous deposit. Close to a large boulder, near the mouth of the cave, and completely buried in bats' dung, we found two bundles of pitch-pine sticks, each stick about a couple of feet long, and of the thickness of a lead pencil, bound together with henequen fibre, and evidently meant to

be used as torches. These had probably been left, centuries before, by the ancient occupants, as the henequen, which is a remarkably tough and lasting fibre, was quite rotten from age. The pitch-pine, on the other hand, which is full of resin and practically indestructible, was as good now as on the day it was left there. Lighting one of the bundles, which made an excellent torch, we proceeded to explore the cave. For a considerable distance the passage was straight and flat, but suddenly the floor took a dip downwards, and we found our way blocked by a small lagoon of beautiful clear water. Skirting round the margin of this on an elevated ridge, we came to a rocky wall four or five feet high, beyond which we entered another passage, covered with great limestone boulders and innumerable pieces of pottery of all sorts, sizes, and shapes, some almost whole, but all so rotten from damp that on lifting them they broke from their own weight. Continuing along this, we debouched suddenly into a great rocky chamber, the exact size and shape of which we were not able to make out, as the light of the torch was not sufficient to illuminate it. The floor of this chamber was covered with stalagmites of all sizes, and some of these, joining with the stalactites which hung from the roof, formed great round columns reaching from floor to ceiling. The constant drip, drip, of water from the stalactites hanging from the roof was the only sound which broke the death-like stillness of this vast cavern. The atmosphere was close, oppressive, and distinctly musty. The floor was carpeted with a layer of potsherds several inches thick, which must have represented many hundreds of vessels. At the further end of the chamber we discovered a small opening about four feet square, from which a little stream trickled along the floor, and evidently fed the lagoon which we had passed on our way in, the surplus water probably finding a vent

to the bowels of the earth somewhere on the sides of the lagoon. We had been so excited at our discoveries that I had taken no note of the passage of time, and it was not till we were suddenly plunged into Egyptian darkness, and the guide informed me that our second torch had just burnt out, that I thought of returning. This, however, was more easily decided on than accomplished, as the chamber was of unknown extent, had several passages opening into it, and we had not the faintest idea in which direction lay the one by which we had entered. After groping about by the light of matches, for nearly an hour, just as we were beginning to get somewhat alarmed my hand came in contact with a small stalagmite from which, as we came in, I had chipped the top, as it was of a beautiful translucent white formation; this I knew was close to the mouth of the right passage. Following this up, we soon arrived at the lagoon, from which only one passage led to the mouth of the cave. Before our torch had gone out I noticed that the top of one of the stalagmites in the great chamber had been rudely carved to represent a human head, and that in front of it was placed a more or less cubical block of stone, which may have served as an altar. At the base of the cliff, immediately beneath the mouth of the cave, I noticed the dry, stony bed of a stream running off through the forest in a southerly direction, from which it would appear that at certain periods the cave is flooded by a torrent, which rushes out from the mouth and along the channel it has cut for itself. The ancient inhabitants had evidently left in the cave vast numbers of pottery vessels of all shapes and sizes, which had been broken in pieces by the flood, and their sherds strewn over the floor, from which one might judge either that the cave was not subject to floods at the time it was occupied

by them, or that they had been driven out by the first of these inundations. When this cave was more thoroughly explored at a later date, a hole or pit was discovered in the main chamber, the mouth of which was evidently above flood-level, as at the bottom of it lay great numbers of pottery vessels, chiefly of hard, thin, polished red ware. These included huge amphora-shaped vessels for holding water, small spherical teapot-shaped vessels with an upright spout, three-legged pots, cylindrical vases, and many others. With them were several flat, circular pottery discs, used by the ancient Maya for baking their tortillas, or corn cakes.

Soon after leaving the cave we were met by an Indian, who had come out in search of me, as a very serious accident had occurred at Benque Viejo during my absence. How this man had followed us across six miles of open bush and stony ground, where to my inexperienced eyes we had not left a trace, was to me inexplicable, yet he had done it, and moreover, done it quickly. On arriving at the *plaza* I saw that something out of the common must have happened, as everyone in the village appeared to be gathered round the *cabildo*, from which they were with difficulty kept out by the *Alcalde* and native constables, from whom I soon learnt what had occurred. It appeared that close to the village lies a small sugar estate, the cane from which is ground by the old primitive method of squeezing it between vertical rollers, worked by bullocks, each harnessed to the distal end of a long, horizontal beam, the proximal ends of which fit into the top of the centre roller. The unfortunate man who had met with the accident—a Spanish negro of magnificent physique—had been feeding the machine by placing pieces of cane between the rollers, when he thoughtlessly rested his hand on one of them. Before

he could withdraw it his fingers were caught between the revolving cylinders. Instinctively he placed his other hand on the roller, in order to gain sufficient leverage to pull his right hand out, but this was also caught between the rollers. Immediately on feeling his fingers gripped he had shouted to the Indian who was driving the cattle to stop them, but Indians are leisurely in their movements, and steers even more so, and by the time the machine was stopped both arms had been crushed to a pulp almost up to his shoulder-joints. When I saw him the man was quite conscious, and had made up his mind to die, for, as he said, without his arms he had no particular use for life. Fortunately, the shock had been so severe that he was not in very much pain. I had not got any instruments with me, and by the time I could have sent for them it would have been too late, so I procured a hunting-knife with a blade about ten inches long, which I ground till it was razor-edged, and afterwards sterilised by boiling, and with this instrument I removed both his arms. The only anæsthetic I was able to give him was a large shot of rum. As I had feared, he died from the shock of his injuries, which had not only pulped the arms, but also injured the chest wall. After this poor fellow's death, I returned to my headquarters at Cayo, as there was nothing further to keep me in Benque Viejo.

Soon after my return I was invited to what is known as a "first log" party, a *fiesta* given by the owner of a mahogany bank for his labourers, and those of the surrounding camps, and their lady friends, to celebrate the trucking out of the first mahogany logs of the season. Mahogany is the industry *par excellence* of the colony, from which it derives its motto of "*Sub Umbra Floreo*," and a short description of it may not be uninteresting.

Towards the end of August the "hunter" sets out into the bush to locate the trees, scattered over scores, and perhaps hundreds, of square miles, for the coming season. This at first sight looks like trying to discover the proverbial needle, but, as a matter of fact, an experienced bushman will not miss many trees in any tract of primeval forest he is searching. Noting the highest available points, he climbs the tallest trees on these, and is able to spot mahogany, the foliage of which at this season of the year is of a bright coppery green colour and stands out conspicuously against the lighter green background of the surrounding forest. Having taken his bearings, he blazes a trail from each tree to the spot which has been selected—on the bank of a river or large creek—for the *barquedix*, where the logs will ultimately be thrown into the water. The hunter must be a man of nerve and judgment, possessing a thorough knowledge of bush-craft, as he is buried in the virgin forest for weeks at a time, thrown entirely on his own resources, and dependent on himself alone for his food supply and for finding his way about in what to most people would be a trackless wilderness. Meantime, in Belize, the employer, having got together his gangs (each gang consisting of from thirty to sixty men, with their womenfolk and children), proceeds to transport them to the scene of their future operation, the "banks" chosen by the mahogany-hunter, distant from fifty to a hundred miles from the capital. This is usually done by water, and the scene is an extremely animated one when a large gang is leaving the wharf at Belize. Troops of friends and relatives come to see them off, clad in cotton garments embracing all the colours of the rainbow, jabbering and gesticulating, crying, quarrelling, chaffing, laughing, and singing like a lot of children. The vessels are piled up with a heterogeneous collection of

cooking utensils, barrels of pork and flour, bundles of clothes, mahogany wash-tubs, bunches of plantains, black piccaninnies, hunting dogs, goats, guns, etc., till not a square inch of vacant space seems available—an idea soon negatived by the squeezing in of a score or more hefty negro men and women. Arrived at the bank, all hands start by making a large clearing, and erecting the bush houses which are to serve them till the end of the season. These are constructed from pimento-stems held together with ropes of liana, and rudely thatched with palm-leaves. The beds, which are fixtures, are made by hammering four notched sticks in the ground, notches uppermost, across which are laid stout saplings so as to form a raised platform 7ft. by $3\frac{1}{2}$ ft., on which is strewn a thick layer of palm-leaves, when the bed and mattresses are ready for use. A chair or two, and a table made from old packing-cases, helped out by sticks cut in the forest, and the family is provided with a home, furnished complete, practically free of cost. All these preparations are finished within a week or ten days, and then commences the real work of the year. First a main truck-pass has to be cut into the heart of the timber country, and, branching off from this, minor passes to each tree marked by the hunter. These passes are eighteen feet wide, and the men are given from fifty to a hundred yards of pass to cut for a day's task, according to the thickness of the bush to be cut through. The next procedure is to fell the trees themselves, and as the larger ones throw out enormous buttresses or spurs from the lower six or eight feet of their trunks, it has usually to be done above this level. For this purpose a light platform of poles, known as a barbecue, is erected round each tree, upon which the axeman stands. The trees vary considerably in size, and whereas a man may cut two or even three trees of 18in. to

2ft. in diameter in a day, it may take him several days to fell a large tree. One of the largest logs ever shipped weighed 15 tons, and squared 57in. by 64in. Upon such a giant as this two or three axemen would be working at the same time. The trees felled and trimmed, the trunks and larger branches are cut into suitable lengths for moving to the nearest river, either on trucks or sleds. Trucks are vast cumbersome structures, standing on four solid wooden wheels, and put together on the banks from an exceedingly tough wood known as Santa Maria, the main object in their construction being strength. The logs are rolled on to them by means of an inclined plane, and the whole contrivance is drawn down to the river bank by from six to twelve yoke of oxen. Sledding has to be resorted to when, as not infrequently happens, the truck passes have become so deep in mud that the wheels of the trucks bog, and the cattle cannot pull them out of the mud-holes. Stout poles are laid transversely along the passes, forming a sort of corduroy road, the wheels of the trucks are removed, and in their places stout runners are attached, which glide easily over the poles. After two or three trips the poles sink out of sight, and have to be frequently renewed. Trucking is always undertaken at night, as the work would be too heavy for the oxen under the scorching tropical sun, and it was a "first log" party of this kind that I had now come to see.

The scene was an animated one. A number of the men, naked but for a pair of cotton drawers, held great flaring torches of pitch-pine, which cast a weird glare through the pitchy darkness of the forest. The men's black, shining bodies, streaming with perspiration, reminded one of a scene from the inferno, and the illusion was heightened by the constant screaming and yelling of all engaged in the

work. At last the log was loaded, and with cracks of the long raw-hide whips ringing like pistol-shots through the forest the patient oxen were started on their journey. Many a narrow shave the truck had on its five-mile course, now jolting over a two-foot stump, now sinking into a huge hole, again shaving the trunk of a tree and avoiding wreckage by the fraction of an inch, or plunging down the steep bank of a creek and nearly upsetting; but at length it arrived at the bank, the first log was unloaded, the cattle outspanned and regaled with a well-deserved feed of breadnut leaves, and the night's festivities commenced. The table, made from pine boards resting on packing-cases, was set in a clearing in the forest, lighted by a few hurricane lamps, and numbers of pitch-pine torches attached to the surrounding trees. The spread was a truly noble one, consisting of great joints of pork, turkey, legs of venison and wild hog, corassow, roast gibnut and armadillo, piles of corn cake, Johnny cake, and Spanish *pan dulce*, with lots of boiled plantain, sweet potato, yam, and—best of all—unlimited white rum. There was a distinct shortage of table utensils, and pocket-knives had to be requisitioned, nor were there enough tin pannikins to go round, but these were minor drawbacks where food and drink were plentiful, and every guest had come well charged with the spirit of enjoyment, determined to have a good time at all costs. The feast over, everyone adjourned to the store-room, which had been cleared of its contents, and dancing commenced. The dust raised from the dry earth floor by the stamping of so many large, vigorous, moccasined feet was so pungent that I soon retired to the quiet bush for an hour to smoke a cigar. On returning, I noticed an unpleasant, tense feeling in the air, and that a certain restraint had replaced the previous good fellowship between the labourers from the different

mahogany camps, especially between the Spanish-Indian and negro element, and judged that but a very slight spark would cause a considerable explosion. Most of the men were drunk enough to have lost control of their tempers, but not so drunk as to be disinclined for a fight, and as many of them wore their machetes, and the rest kept these where they could be got at a moment's notice, it looked as if trouble were coming. It was. One of my host's gang, a stoutly-built little Indian, quiet and inoffensive, had been bullied all the evening by a hulking negro, a member of one of the other river gangs. At last the Indian could stand it no longer, and, drawing his machete, sprang at his tormentor, but the black, realising what was coming, dodged behind a bench, had his own machete out in a twinkling, and they were at it hammer and tongs. At first some of the friends of both combatants rushed in to separate them, but this quickly precipitated a clash between the yellow and black elements, and half a dozen duels were soon going on instead of one. The first couple were just sufficiently drunk to make them thoroughly savage, and were evidently out for each other's blood, but the affair was a very short one, as the little Indian, though full of pluck, was no match for his gigantic opponent in height, weight, or reach, and his weapon was soon knocked spinning out of his hand to the other end of the room by an upward blow from the blunt edge of the negro's machete. Finding himself unarmed, he put up his arms to guard his head, at the same time half-turning to run for safety, but it was not to be, for the negro brought his machete down with all force on the back of the other's skull, behind his raised arms, felling him like a pole-axed ox; then, not waiting to ascertain the result, made a dash for the door, and was across the adjacent Guatemala border before anything could be done to stop

him. This contretemps sobered the other combatants, who had none of them received anything worse than a few flesh wounds, and peace soon reigned. The Indian lay insensible on the floor, bleeding from a terrible wound in the back of his head. A large oval section from the occipital bone, including the scalp, the bone, the lining membrane of the skull, and a small piece of the brain, had been cleanly shaved off from the back of his head by the sharp, heavy cutlass-like machete, and was lying on the ground by his side. I had but little hope of his recovery, as the brain itself was injured, but had him removed to the nearest house, where I ligatured the bleeding arteries, and dressed the wound antiseptically. With the truly marvellous vitality of the Indian where wounds are concerned, he made an uninterrupted recovery, and three weeks later was walking about again. The only evil after-effects from which he suffered were that, whereas before the injury he had always been somewhat sleepy and stupid, his somnolence became very much accentuated, and his stupidity developed into something not very far removed from idiocy. He persistently refused to recognise his wife, saying he knew nothing about her, and wanted to have nothing to do with her. Nor could he ever be moved from this attitude, which I sometimes thought was partly assumed, as she was both a shrew and a sloven, and extremely unsatisfactory as a wife.

CHAPTER VIII

Fishing along the coast—Trip to Punta Gorda—Caribs—Their wonderful seamanship—Start for the ruins of Lubaantun—Dangerous dug-out—Limited intelligence of Kekchi Indians—Game very plentiful—A bad run—Tigers—Curious names given to falls by the Indians—Pleasant travelling—Yellow tails—The Indian woman's hard lot—Join Lady Brown and Mitchell Hedges in little bush hut—Putting up bush houses at ruins—Carried by Indians to ruins in a hammock—Pig-killing—Profiteering in corn cakes—Communitistic system amongst Kekchi Indians—Wonderful instinct of blind boy, working in forest—Indian lost in the bush—Village turns out to look for him—Kekchi loafer; his idea of becoming a landowner without capital—The lost man found—An Indian miser—Making corn plantation; a sacred rite amongst the Maya—Degeneracy of modern Maya.

ON returning to Belize in December, 1924, I joined Lady Brown and Mr. Mitchell Hedges, and, after a short holiday spent in fishing on the cays and reefs along the coast of British Honduras, we arrived, early in March, 1925, on board their yacht, the *Cara*, at Punta Gorda, the southernmost settlement in the colony, with a view to ascending the Rio Grande, and continuing, on its Columbia branch, our exploration of the ancient Maya ruins of Lubaantun, which we had commenced the previous year. This is a pretty little town of less than 1,000 inhabitants, mostly Caribs, those curious aborigines, coming originally from the Amazon delta, who had at the time of the Spanish Conquest overrun the greater part of the West Indies, and to no inconsiderable extent of the Atlantic coast of Central America. Like the Hebrews, they have mixed very little with other races; indeed, it is considered rather a disgrace amongst them for either a man or woman to marry outside the tribe. They are physically

a magnificent race, though jet-black in colour, and of decidedly negroid type. Many of them are distinguished by a peculiar skin-disease known as "pinta," which takes the form of spots and blotches of dead-white, appearing usually on the face and hands, but sometimes covering the whole body. Sufferers from this disease emit a peculiarly unpleasant mousey odour. The women do nearly all the work, tilling the fields, making cassava bread, which, with fish, forms their staple diet, looking after the children and household, and doing the washing. The men generally occupy themselves in fishing and trading along the coast of Central America in their large open doreys. They are wonderful sailors, more at home on sea than on land, and think nothing of making voyages of hundreds of miles in their open dug-outs, for, should the boat be capsized, all hands simply set to work, right her, bale her out, and continue the voyage. There is little to lose on board beyond the salt fish and cassava bread, and a short immersion in sea-water will rather improve these tough provisions than otherwise. The Caribs are curiously suspicious, and when the Government sent round to have them all examined, and give those suffering from hookworm free treatment, they could not realise that they were actually getting something for nothing, and told the inspector that they knew the Government was getting something out of them by sending round the little tin boxes for samples.

"Why, of course," the inspector answered. "Haven't you heard that in one of them was found a pink conch pearl, which the Governor sold for 1,500 dollars, and the Caribs, being such big conch-eaters, are naturally the first to be examined?" They were perfectly satisfied with this explanation.

I left Punta Gorda on March 10th (Lady Brown and

Mitchell Hedges having preceded me by a few days) in my motor-boat, the *Booksie*, towing a large Indian dug-out with a crew of four, and my own little dug-out with two paddlers. The sea was as smooth as glass, and we arrived at the bar of the Rio Grande at 7.30 a.m. This is impossible to miss, as it is covered with tree-trunks of all kinds and sizes, undergoing a process of slow disintegration on the mud-shoals, where they have been stranded by the river-floods of successive rainy seasons. The banks of the Rio Grande along the first few miles of its course are covered with mangrove swamps, and very uninteresting. I saw a dozen old worm-eaten logs of mahogany lying together in the swamp, where they must have been stranded and left by the receding floods, when the wood was cheaper than it is at present.

At 1.25 we reached Jacinto Creek, and boarded the *Cara*, left there by Lady Brown and Mitchell Hedges on the 5th. In charge of her was Robby, their negro servant, who didn't like being left alone at all, as he said that, what with the heat by day, the sand-flies in the evening, and the ghosts at night, it was no place for a self-respecting negro. Soon after leaving Jacinto Creek we came to Big Hill, a considerable elevation rising straight from the river bank. By the side of this was a truck pass leading to the river, along which mahogany logs were being taken out from the bush in the interior, and floated down the river to the sea. Some optimist amongst the mahogany-labourers had even cleared a bit of the almost perpendicular side of the hill, with a view to growing a little maize and a few plantains to supplement his meagre rations of pork and flour. About 3 p.m. we took to the dug-outs, and tied the *Booksie* to a log for Robby to fetch on the following day. They were decidedly overloaded, only two inches of freeboard appearing at the centre

of the larger one, over which, in the excitement of starting, and frenzied paddling, water kept sloshing, and I began to fear we should never get this load of flour, potatoes, tents, guns, cameras, suitcases, and other paraphernalia, over the falls, even with a lot transhipped to my little dorey. I tried a conversation with the paddler just behind me, one Juan Tus, a Kekchi Indian, who spoke a little Spanish. To every observation of mine his answer was "*Si, no.*" If asked for an opinion, it was "*Quien sabe?*" ("Who knows?"), and, for a definite statement, a blank "*No say*" ("I don't know"). The conversation ran somewhat as follows: "*El corriente es muy fuerte*" ("The current is very strong"). "*Si, no, señor*" ("Yes, no, señor"). "*Cuántas leguas de aquí hasta las raudales?*" ("How many leagues from here to the falls?"). "*Quien sabe, señor?*" ("Who knows, Señor?"). "*Hay peje en este río?*" ("Are there any fish in this river?"). "*No say, señor*" ("I don't know, señor").

He reminded me of Morley's old Indian, supposed to be very weather-wise, who, on being consulted one morning, as we were about to start out on mule-back, as to whether it was likely to rain, looked long and absorbedly into the cloudless sky, and then gravely gave his opinion: "*Pues, señor, talvez si, talvez no, pero lo mas probable es quien sabe?*" ("Well, sir, possibly yes, possibly no, but most probably, who knows?").

As we passed the place where my dug-out upset the previous year I had cold shivers, for I was sitting high in a similar and very cranky craft, with two scant inches of freeboard, and increasing hilarity on the part of the bowman, together with the smell wafted aft on the breeze, warned me that he had recently obtained a supply of new rum. We scared a sixteen-foot alligator from a low mud-bank. He did not dive in till we were within twenty feet of him, and then

swung calmly and slowly along on the surface, a sure indication that alligators had not been much molested along this river. The banks of the river were of brown mud, in places steep, in places sloping gently to the water's edge. I noticed numerous tracks of tiger, peccari, and deer at almost every convenient drinking-place, showing that the country must be full of game, as, indeed, it should be, being practically uninhabited.

At 8.30 p.m., by the light of the moon, we passed a fall called Tiger Run, where both the bowman and steersman had to get out and pull the dorey for all they were worth, up to their middles in the fierce current, while the other two men poled for their lives, and then we only just managed to make headway ; indeed, at one time it looked as though the current were going to get the better of us, in which case we should have been swept broadside on into the whirlpool below, where we should certainly have lost all our equipment, and not improbably been drowned. An hour above this fall (about 10 p.m.) we came to Indian Creek, where we put ashore for the night. Here we found two little palm-leaf shelters, put up by Indians navigating the river, of which I took one and the men the other. They told me that when Lady Brown and Hedges came up the previous week he sat on the edge of his cot here, with a gun ready by his side, and three hurricane lamps burning, in case of raids by tigers, or rather, jaguars, which are fairly common in the neighbourhood ; but I had no lady to look after, and was so tired that all the tigers in Central America could not have kept me awake, so I went off to sleep at once, only to be awakened about 4 a.m. by an invasion of sand-flies, against which the large mesh of my mosquito curtain was no protection. We pulled out at daybreak, and soon came to a big fall called El Diablo, where two of the men had to get

out again and pull the dorey over. The nomenclature of these falls, of which there are over a hundred between Jacinto Creek and San Pedro, is rather quaint. The one we had just passed is called "El Diablo," or "The Devil"; the largest one of all, "Randal de Todos los Diablos" ("The Fall of all the Devils"), while a very difficult one between these is known as "Viejo no Pasa," or "Old Man can't Pass."

At 2 p.m. we arrived at the fork between the Columbia and the Rio Grande, and passing up the Columbia Branch, found a stream, smaller, slower, very narrow, and so blocked by fallen trees as to make its passage extremely difficult. Just before reaching the fork we passed under a natural bridge over the river, made by a gigantic wild cotton-tree, which, falling clean across, had neatly spanned it from bank to bank. The banks are in many cases composed of shale, which, in transverse section, looks uncommonly like the wall of a stone house, except that the formation is hardly anywhere exactly horizontal, but dips at all sorts of angles. Where sections made by the water through the shale are horizontal, the landing-places look precisely as if they had been paved with stone flags, and, indeed, the Indians believe that these were artificial landing-stages, made by the same people who built the ruins of Lubaantun.

Travelling on the Rio Grande is, on the whole, very pleasant, as the scenery is really beautiful and wonderfully variegated once one gets above the mangrove zone. The overhanging trees protect one from the sun, and ensure a certain amount of coolth, even on the hottest day, while one's sense of smell is pleasantly titilated at intervals by various sweet-scented flowering shrubs in the bush. At night, with the full moon illuminating the river through

the exquisite tracery of the leafy roof overhead, bats and nightjars flitting silently over the water in pursuit of moths and flies, the voice of the night bush making itself heard in the booming of frogs calling to each other from tree to tree, the hoot of an owl, the barking of a wakeful ape, the occasional scream of a hunting puma, or the splash of an alligator chasing fish, and the sweet, elusive smell of night-blooming jasmine borne on the faint breeze at intervals, he must indeed be a captious wayfarer who is not entranced with the beauty and romance of the river and the bush.

We passed a tree covered with the hanging nests of the beautiful yellow tail, close to the river bank. These nests are nearly four feet long, somewhat egg-shaped, with a long, tubular passage opening into the interior below, through which the bird enters, but which is impenetrable for snakes, monkeys, and other egg-stealers, as the nests hang in groups from the slenderest branches, and sway about like toy balloons even in the lightest breeze. One can watch with interest for hours the aerial manoeuvres of these birds, banking, and shooting from beneath with the utmost precision into the opening, which is always in a state of lively motion as the slender branch from which it hangs, swings and gyrates dizzily in the breeze. During the breeding season they make a curious booming noise, which can be heard for a long distance through the bush, and rather gives away the location of their nesting-place to human and other enemies. At 7.30 p.m. we passed the landing-place leading to a small clearing where a solitary Indian had built his hut in the middle of the bush. Three women were at the waterside washing maize, softened and husked by soaking in lye, to make the next day tortillas, or corn cakes. It was quite dark, and the operation had to be carried on by the light of a pitch-pine torch held by a

little girl of ten or twelve. The Indian woman's life is not an easy one, as the corn would not be ready for an hour or so, and she would have to be up at 3 a.m. next morning to grind it into paste on the hand grindstone, literally watered with the sweat of her brow, as she bent double over the stone, for the manufacture of corn cake for her lord's breakfast before he started out to work, and these operations have to be repeated every day of her life, without intermission, from the time she is old enough to wield a *brazo*, or stone corn-rubber, till the day she dies.

At 8.30 we arrived at the landing-place for the ruins of Lubaantun, thoroughly worn out after fourteen hours' continuous poling, paddling, and dragging over rapids and falls, most of the way against a terrific current. Next morning I found Lady Brown and Hedges camped out in a little bush hut they had hired from the Indian owner. They had been getting their drinking-water from one of the little creeks which flow by the ruins, as it seemed less likely to be contaminated than the main branch, but on discovering on the same day pigs wallowing above their usual water supply, and an Indian girl with badly ulcerated legs giving them a bath close at hand, they saw reason to change their minds and return to the river. They had arrived five days before me, but not knowing either Spanish or Kekchi, had been unable to hire any labour for clearing bush over the ruins, so had been marking time till I turned up. Both were feeling rather gloomy, as on the previous day Hedges had been obliged to shoot Michael, a pet ape to which they were both very much attached, as he had eaten some sort of poisonous irritant leaf in the bush, which brought on diarrhoea, vomiting, and intense pain. His end was, however, painless, and he was accorded



LADY RICHMOND BROWN, MR. MITCHELL HEDGES, AND DR. GANN,
CONCESSIONAIRES OF THE RUINS

the honour of burial beneath one of the ancient Maya pyramids of Lubaantun.

I succeeded in getting a few Indians to put up a couple of bush huts at the ruins for the men and myself. I had with me Muddy, and a raw youth named Gallego, whom I kept chiefly because of his cheerful grin and unfailing optimism, but he was perfectly useless for anything else, and nearly every task he undertook had to be done again by Muddy, the efficient. I also engaged the use of a toronja, or forbidden fruit tree, and a supply of chickens and eggs from the Indians. Next morning I was carried by two Indians in a hammock, slung to a long pole, up to my hut at the ruins, as, though it was less than half a mile, I was unable to get over the stump-strewn track which had just been cut through the bush, on my game leg, but just recovered from an attack of phlebitis, and still far from sound.

The Indians had done wonders in twenty-four hours in the matter of house-building, and I found a large terrace fronting a broad stone stairway, the gate of the ruins, completely cleared of bush, and upon it, almost finished, two nice little bush houses with walls of sticks and roofs of split cuhoon leaves. If Europe could be contented with the houses and the food which satisfy all tropical America, we should not hear so much of the shortage of dwellings and the H.C.L. On the Sunday, Muddy, who had contracted to feed the labourers at so much a head, killed a pig which he had bought in the village, and the whole day was spent in cutting the meat into strips and hanging it out to dry in the sun. The fat was fried down in an immense iron kettle over a fireplace composed of three large stones, and a whole kerosene tin of lard was obtained, with a considerable quantity of a hard, brittle, brown substance

known as *chicheron*. This is boiled with the beans, and swells to incredible dimensions, giving the men the impression that they are getting a huge helping of meat, when in reality they get hardly an ounce. With the beans are also boiled chenopodium leaves as an anti-spasmodic, otherwise, as Muddy explained, they would be so blown up after their midday meal that they would not be able to work at all in the afternoon. The next day the men would have to eat the head, liver, spleen, and other "innards" of the pig, so they would get no beans, as these parts do not go well with beans, but the whole would be boiled into a sort of soup, with a liberal thickening of flour. The men had to bring their own corn cakes, those from a distance bringing a week's supply, experience having taught us that if we supplied corn cakes to the labourers, the ladies who make them at once put up the price 200 or 300 per cent., as they are even worse profiteers than the labourers themselves. When they work for each other, as they frequently do—a dozen men getting together to help a neighbour build a new house, or clear a patch of bush for planting corn—there is no question of payment involved, but the helpers have to be fed, and well fed at that. It is, indeed, an unwritten law amongst them that the helpers shall receive a liberal ration of chicken at least once in the day, this being a luxury which on ordinary occasions they would not perhaps taste a dozen times in the year. We had working for us a blind man, and the way he managed to find his way about in the bush was nothing short of miraculous. He never got in the way of other men near whom he was chopping, and always avoided the trees of all sizes, which were falling in every direction around him, as if by instinct, while to see him make straight back, after his meals, through the bush, for perhaps a hundred yards, to

the exact spot where he was clearing before, was a revelation. He walked every morning through a little *picado*, or pass, which we had cut from the huts to the ruin, very narrow and tortuous and full of tree and bush-stumps. At night none of us went along it, as in the dark it was the easiest thing in the world, even with a lantern, to walk off into the bush and lose oneself; yet this boy tripped along it without the slightest hesitation, with the occasional tap of a long stick to guide him. On arriving at the ruins, he made his way straight to Muddy's hut, where the grindstone was kept, sharpened his machete, and proceeded to the place where he had been cutting bush at the base of the terrace. We had to give him a special location to himself, as the other Indians treated him brutally when he was working beside them, felling small trees and maliciously letting them fall on him, then laughing at his terror; and on one occasion, when he missed his way, they deliberately let him wander off into the bush and get lost, regarding it as an excellent joke. Their conduct seemed to be due more to thoughtlessness and lack of imagination than to actual love of cruelty, though it would not be astonishing if they had developed the latter to a high degree, after four centuries of Spanish misrule and proselytising by means of the Inquisition, for, when I remonstrated with them, they were obviously ashamed of themselves. I examined the boy, and found him to be suffering from easily operatable double cataract, and when we left Lubaantun we took him back to Belize and left him at the hospital to be cured. Notwithstanding his youth and his affliction, he had had, as his friends explained rather proudly, no less than six wives, but stuck to the present one, a little, very homely Indian woman, lame as the result of old hip-joint disease, as she made very good corn cakes, and was in other ways

an excellent provider. Moreover, as they pointed out, what did her looks matter to a man who had never seen, and was never likely to see, her face? I only hope that in restoring his sight I shall not have been the indirect means of breaking up the happy home.

Very few men turned up to work the next day, and, on going down to the village to discover the cause, we found the whole place deserted. It appeared that on the Friday night a youth of eighteen, one of our former labourers, had disappeared from his house, and not been heard of since. No ordinary Indian could, of course, get lost in the bush, where he is just as much at home as a monkey, a wild hog, or any other of its natural denizens, but this youth had always been looked upon as somewhat weak-minded, and it was feared that he might have fallen into the river, or been picked up by a wandering jaguar, of whom there are a great number about at present, and very bold, as they have actually raided the village by night and carried off pigs from their sties. The *Alcalde* had organised the whole of the male population into a search-party, and they started at dawn to try and track the lost boy, though with little hope of finding him, as the country is covered with dense, impenetrable forest, in which one man is as a grain of sand in the desert.

A Guatemalan man called on me for medicine for himself and his wife. He had settled amongst the Indians years ago, married one of their girls, and had been more or less a parasite on them ever since. He was a miserable, thin, sallow, anæmic little runt, suffering from hookworm, chronic anæmia, splenic enlargement, and *granos*, or sores, all over his legs, and, if one may believe his own tale, Job had nothing on him in the matter of ill-luck. He had a little patch of land on the river bank where he raised pigs



LUBAANTUN : CLEARING RUINS



BLEEDING FROM THE TEMPORAL VEIN (*see page 83*)

and fowls, and made a corn plantation, but recently his 200 fowls were all killed by opossums and tiger-cats ; twenty-seven of his twenty-nine pigs died of cholera—which, as he treated them with large doses of Epsom salts, was not surprising—and his corn was a failure, so he was now left with nothing between him and starvation but a couple of small pigs and a few plantain-trees which will not bear fruit for a couple of months. He was, however, a confirmed optimist, and was anxious to find out whether I would use my good offices with the Government to get them to sell him twenty-five *mansanas* of land along the Rio Grande on credit, as he had no cash. I was introduced to his wife who accompanied him, a large, fat, slummocky Kekchi Indian woman, in the early thirties. He explained that their great trouble was that they had had no children, though properly married by the padre—quite an exceptional state of affairs—for nearly seven years, and, as he hoped that with my aid he was soon about to become a man of property, he felt that it was only proper that he should have an heir to inherit his future possessions, so with this object in view he had brought his wife along to see if I could not remedy the disability from which she suffered. I gave them a heart-to-heart talk on the folly of raising children when they had not the energy to raise enough chickens, pigs, and corn for themselves, but I fear it was wasted, as he sat and talked on and on for a couple of hours of his roseate prospects for the future, and I only succeeded in getting rid of him by suggesting a job of bush cutting, at good wages, with our outfit. The very mention of regular work scared him at once, and he departed, saying he would think it over and let me know in a week, but he knew, and I knew, that he had not the slightest intention of taking the job, though he was so hard up that he ha

to borrow an egg here, and a few handfuls of corn and chili there, from the Indians, who had no use whatever for him, or—for the matter of that—for any other Latin-American, all of whom they despise and dislike.

The searchers eventually found the lost boy in the bush. He was in a very exhausted condition, and could hardly walk; indeed, another twenty-four hours would probably have finished him off, as for four days he had had nothing to eat but such fruits and roots as he could pick up, and, being of very limited intelligence at the best, had not known where to look for these, or what to choose. I fear his return was not welcomed with the joy that it might have been, as he had no near relatives, and the old gentleman who had adopted him on the death of his father had found him a liability rather than an asset, owing to his want of intelligence. This old man was that rare thing amongst the Indians—a miser. He was undoubtedly well off, with herds of pigs, flocks of fowls, and large corn plantations, and for years had been accumulating cash, which he was reputed to keep buried in a box beneath the earth floor of his hut. Never, however, did he expend a cent without regret; clothed in an old, tattered cotton shirt and trousers, he lived on straight corn cake flavoured with chili pepper, never even running to a few eggs, beans fried in lard, or even a piece of pork, luxuries in which the poorest Indian can at times indulge.

Only ten men turned up for work, as they all went back to their corn plantations, from the cultivation of which hardly any inducement in the way of wages will keep these remote bush Indians. For nearly 2,000 years the Indian has relied upon his plantation to supply him with food, drink, clothes, and luxuries, till its cultivation has become a sort of sacred ritual, which, even when—as in rare instances

occurs—he acquires money and property, he is very loth to give up. The felling of the bush, and burning it after it has dried in the sun, the planting of the corn, garnering it into the corn-house, and subsequent husking and shelling by the whole family, are carried out in their proper seasons, helped by neighbours and friends, who in turn are assisted by him in the making of their plantations; the calling in secretly of the priests of the old religion—known as *chaacs* and *mens*—to perform the appropriate ceremonies and make the proper sacrifices of vegetables, fruit, meat, and tobacco, to the old gods of fertility, rain, and wind—all these were part of the Maya's life for centuries before the coming of Europeans. The communal work on the *milpa* is really a picnic, in which all the men of the village join, their corn cakes, beans, and *sacha*—a drink made from ground corn boiled in water—being brought out to them at midday by the women and children, the whole community disposing themselves under palm-leaf shelters to eat and drink, laugh and chatter, for an hour before resuming work. In the very secret, jealously guarded, and highly elaborate ritual of sacrifice to the ancient gods of the Maya, only the men join, though the women are allowed the privilege of preparing the various food-offerings. It is only after years of intimate association with the Indians, when they realise that the outlander's sympathy is really with them, that he is allowed to witness one of these ceremonies, in which they feel that they escape, at any rate for a time, from the yoke of the hated conqueror, and return to do honour to their old gods, who, after five centuries of banishment, are yet by no means forgotten or neglected. Unfortunately, the Maya Quichè, as well as the northern Maya, who have come more intimately in contact with whites (chiefly mahogany and chicle contractors, and

Syrian and Armenian peddlers), are gradually losing their own *milpa*-making habit, and so, cut off from the land which they love, from their ancient agricultural tradition and age-old mode of life, they are rapidly approaching the last stage in that slow process of degeneration which began nearly 1,300 years ago, when they left their Old Empire cities to migrate into Yucatan, and which can only end—and that before many years have elapsed—in complete extinction.

CHAPTER IX

Discovery of subterranean vault—Great hopes as to its contents—Bitter disappointment—Another mystery—Indians turn up for medical treatment—Their ailments—Wonders performed by amateurs armed with a medicine chest usually unreliable—Back to their ancient remedies—Excavation of two burial mounds—Contents of first burial mound—Food offerings with the dead—Age of mounds—Plaque with possible data in Maya hieroglyphics—Wonderful head-dresses and costumes of ancient inhabitants, as shown in figurines—Female figures—Find skeleton, apparently female.

WE commenced work by opening up a small circular stone-faced mound, 21ft. in diameter and 4ft. high, numbered 32 on the plan. It was built throughout of large blocks of stone, some of which had been worked. On reaching the ground-level we came upon several large flags of shale which had disintegrated with time and the superincumbent weight, and fallen in to a small subterranean chamber of which they originally formed the roof. This chamber measured 17ft. by 4ft. and was 5ft. deep; its walls were built of roughly squared blocks of stone, and the floor of large flags of shale. On first realising that we had come upon a subterranean chamber, I was greatly in hope that we had discovered the burial place of some extremely exalted individual of the old city—perhaps a high priest or cacique, or at least one of the ruling family, for the site of the mound must have been an exceedingly important one, situated as it was in the most conspicuous part of the central avenue leading from the main stairway, between the two rows of stone-faced substructures, up to the amphitheatre. We removed, with the utmost care, the débris of shale left by

the falling in of the roof, till the floor was reached, everything taken out being examined microscopically, yet not one single object or artifact was discovered ; not a weapon, not a vase, not an ornament ! the chamber was absolutely empty. Moreover, not the smallest fragment of bone was brought to light to indicate that it had ever been used as a sepulchral vault. I had never in all my experience of the Maya area met chambers of this kind which had not been used as burial places, and they invariably contained indestructible objects which had been interred with the corpse, such as pottery vessels, jade, shell, and greenstone ornaments, weapons of flint and obsidian, etc.; yet here was a chamber most carefully constructed beneath the ground, over which a mound faced with nicely-cut stone had been erected, placed in the most important avenue of a large city, and yet absolutely devoid of contents. This was but another mystery of this mysterious and recordless city, of which we can only say that it was erected and occupied at some period by the Maya, though when built, for how long occupied, and by what branch of the great Maya people, it is at present impossible to tell.

We were all greatly depressed and disappointed by the result of the excavation of this chamber, as, when the vault was first exposed it seemed almost certain that we had discovered an important tomb, the contents of which could not fail to throw some light on the builders of the city. On the terrace leading to the south stairway were two curious little structures 10ft. long by 4ft. across and about 1ft. high, surrounded by a border of nicely-squared stones, filled in with earth and broken pieces of shale, looking almost exactly like large modern graves ; and on the side of a hill adjacent to the ruins I found between 40 and 50 more of these curious structures. Several of

them were excavated to a depth of 5ft. below the ground-level, but nothing whatever was found, and the use to which they were put is a complete mystery, though it would appear that they had been constructed by Indians who dwelt in and around the ruins at a later period than their original builders, as the latter would hardly have disfigured the terrace leading to the main approach of their city by such unsightly, inappropriate, and insignificant structures as these.

A good many sick Indians kept turning up for treatment, so much so that the free list had to be suspended, and only our labourers and their families treated gratis, which it was hoped might act as an inducement in bringing in more workers, of whom we were sadly in need. The chief complaints seemed to be hookworm, *granos*, or leg ulcers, and enlarged spleen. The first I was able to tackle successfully, the second with a moderate amount of success, when the patient would obey orders as to complete rest—which as a rule he couldn't, being driven by the exigencies of life to root daily for a living for himself and family, or perish—but for the last I could do very little indeed. I am not sure that the Indians' own remedy of drops of the latex of the chichem, or poison wood tree, sprinkled over the spleen is not as efficacious as any more orthodox treatment. One reads of the spectacular cures effected amongst native tribes by travellers equipped with a small medicine chest and a complete ignorance of therapeutics, which raise them at once to the status of minor deities, or at least to that of chief shamans, or medicine men, with all the privileges and immunities attaching to these offices, but I must say that in twenty odd years' experience amongst the Central American Indians I have never found the medicine chest route to their confidence and trust an easy one. They will

accept capsules, tablets, or pills, it is true, on the principle, I imagine, that any deal by which something is acquired for nothing is a desirable one, but they will rarely take them, and when they do, unless a cure is effected after the first few doses, they are rejected as ineffectual, and the good old conservative remedies of their ancestors—a scorched rat for whooping cough, an ice-cold plunge for pneumonia—which have already killed their thousands, are again resorted to. A little spectacular work can sometimes, if occasion offers, be got in with a minor surgical instrument case, especially if supplemented by a few tooth-extraction forceps, but these are two-edged weapons for the amateur completely ignorant of surgical and dental technique, and may end in disaster both for patient and operator.

We started excavation on two small mounds, B and A, situated 90 and 185 yards respectively, almost due south of the terrace upon which my camp stood. The first of these was 33ft. by 27ft., and 6ft. high in the centre. Digging was commenced at the south-west corner, where a stone wall 4ft. high, built of nicely squared blocks of hard limestone, very accurately fitted without any mortar, was brought to light. This was found to form part of a rectangular stone-faced platform, 26ft. by 13ft., and 4ft. high, which formed the core of the mound. By the side of this platform were found the following objects, buried in mixed rubble and earth :

1. Part of a conch shell trumpet, so friable when first extracted as hardly to bear handling, but which on exposure to the air rapidly hardened. This had probably been buried for over two centuries, as conch shell disintegrates exceedingly slowly. In the conch shell mounds on the cays, at least 150 years old, the shells show but slight signs of disintegration.

2. A small pottery plaque, unfortunately broken away at the top and left sides. Its upper part is occupied by a seated figure, only the lower part at which remains, holding in the left hand a hammer-shaped object, surrounded below and on both sides by hieroglyphics. It was perforated above by two holes, probably for suspension on the chest, or around the neck. This is an extraordinarily interesting little object, containing as it does no less than five complete hieroglyphics, a very unusual occurrence in small pottery ornaments. One cannot help being struck by the remarkable resemblance between this small plaque and the great stone stelæ found to the south at Quirigua and Copan, and to the north at Tikal, Panelque, and Naranjo. We see the same oblong field upon which is inscribed in low relief the figure of a god or ruler, around which are arranged the hieroglyphics giving the contemporaneous date of the object, with others, probably descriptive of the nature of the events recorded and the name of the central figure. It is possible that we have inscribed upon this plaque, in the two hieroglyphics which occupy the right lower corner, the date of its manufacture. The first glyph is extremely like the face variant for the numeral 5 with a tun head-dress; the second might well be the face variant for the katun sign, which would make the whole read Katun 5, that is the end of the 20-year period known as Katun 5, which can recur only once in 256 years. This date occurs in our era in the years A.D. 1635 and A.D. 1379. Having regard to the condition of the bones buried with the plaque, it is moderately certain that the first of these dates, i.e. A.D. 1635, would be the date recorded, and we know that as late as the end of the seventeenth century this system of counting by katun endings was practised by the Itza of Peten, only 150 miles north of Lubaantun.

3, 4, & 5. Clay models of elaborate feather-decorated head-dresses, the originals of which were probably built up on a foundation of painted light wood, decorated with feathers, studs, and buttons of jade, shell, and obsidian.

6. A small human figurine complete from the waist up, made of much finer and harder pottery than the other objects, and consequently less defaced by its centuries of contact with the damp earth. The face, with long nose and receding forehead, is seen in profile, the right ear is ornamented with the usual large circular Maya *orejeras*, or earrings, upon the head is an elaborate head-dress, decorated in front with a bearded face, and behind by two tassels, the larger of which hangs down and touches the right elbow. Around the neck is a necklace of long tubular beads, and over the front of the chest a central object not unlike an exaggerated sternal bone, from which extend on each side five bars, possibly representing bare ribs. The whole reminds one of the conventional Maya representation of the god of death, though this personage is almost invariably represented with a death's head, whereas that of the present figure is one of a not ill-looking young man.

7. A plaque, upon which is depicted, in low relief, a personage sitting in what appears to be a large basket, to the upper part of which is attached a pole, the ends borne upon the shoulders of two smaller figures. The individual in the basket is represented as being at least twice the size of his bearers, which, if he was a ruler or priest, merely emphasised the difference in rank, but on the other hand, it may represent the actual figure of a god being borne along in some procession or ceremony. The head-dress of the main figure is extraordinarily elaborate. The upper part consists of a lofty trefoil ornament, beneath which is a

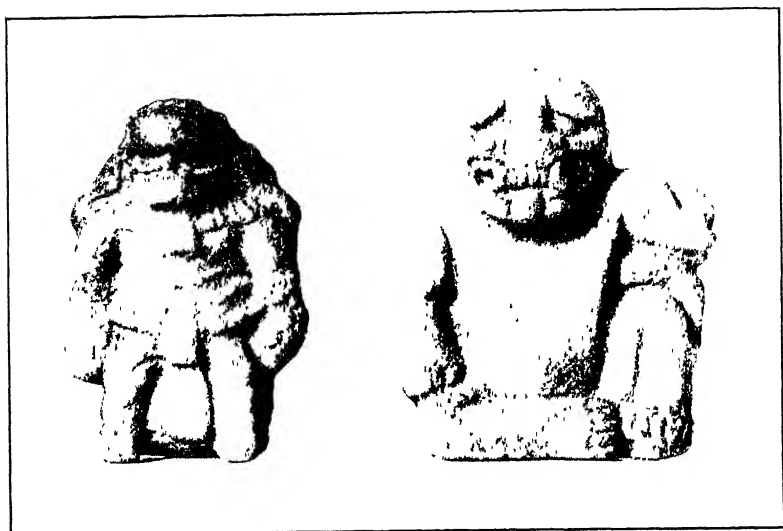
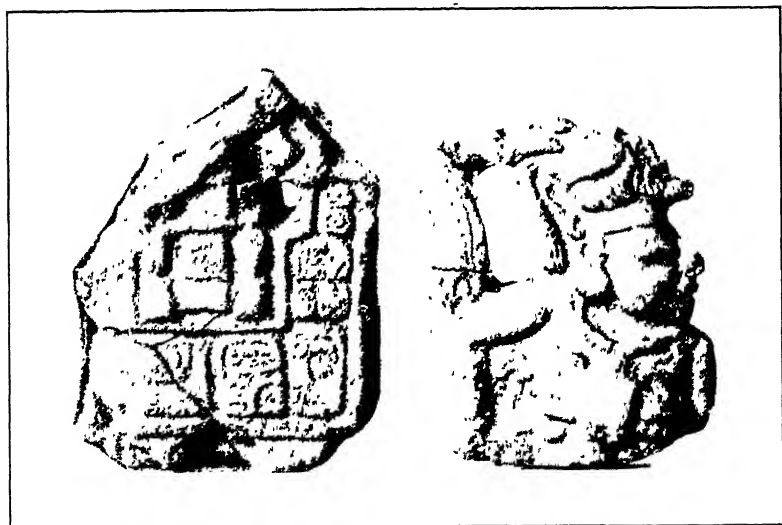


FIGURE WITH HELMET HEAD-DESS

ANTHROPOMORPHIC TIGER FIGURE



PLAQUE POSSIBLY RECORDING END
OF KATUN 5

DEATH GOD, OR WARRIOR

wig-like head covering, with a square space over the forehead, which may represent the natural hair arranged in this peculiar form of coiffure. The usual large circular ear-plugs are worn, each with a long tassel falling below the shoulders. Round the neck is a broad collar consisting of a quadruple row of beads, from which is dependent a cruciform object. The hands both grasp the supporting pole of the basket, and each wrist is ornamented by a broad bead-work wristlet. The background of the figure, from the head-dress to the top of the bar, is ornamented by a double line of feather work. Each of the supporting figures wears a curious head-gear closely resembling a top hat.

8. A bearded human face, broken away from the body at the neck. At the back of the circular ear-plugs is an extremely elaborate triangular ornament apparently composed of folds of stiff pleated cloth. The head-dress consists of a triple row of beads immediately above the forehead, surmounting which is the head of some bird with a long curved beak, probably the muan bird so frequently depicted by Maya artists.

9. Portions of a female figure of very friable rotten pottery, the right hand holding a scarf-like object, while beneath the left arm is a small clay pot.

10. A naked male human figure in a squatting position, the genitalia prominently shown. The back of this figure, which is unbroken, is made in the form of a pig's head, and can be used as a whistle.

11. A short, bald-headed, old man completely devoid of head-dress, with hanging cheeks, and large protruding tongue.

12. The lower part of two male human figures, in poor preservation.

13. A tiger's head.

14. A small object in dull black stone, shaped somewhat like a dumb-bell.

On continuing excavation around the platform to the southern end of the east wall, a human skeleton was unearthed, apparently that of a young adult, and from what could be seen of the muscular insertions on the bone, probably a female. The front teeth were slightly worn, but the molars hardly at all, showing that the individual cannot have reached middle age, otherwise they would have been more ground down by the grit from the rubbing stone, with which corn cakes are always highly impregnated, and which, in an individual passed middle age, has often worn the molars down level with the gums. The skeleton was buried in an extended position, but the bones, which were covered by about 2ft. of mixed earth and rubble, were in a very fair state of preservation, many of them, as the ribs, and vertebræ, had completely disappeared. The skull was placed between two large flat blocks of shale, and had evidently been deliberately crushed at the time of burial; with it was a small, round, three-legged vessel of red polished pottery. Amongst the human bones, and intimately mixed with them, were fragments of other mammalian bones, probably those of a deer. These, with the contents of the pot, had doubtless been buried with the corpse as a food provision for her long journey to the next world. Adjacent to this skeleton were found many fragments of a corn *metate*, or stone handmill, with half the *brazo*, or rubber. Both were made of what is known locally as Esquipulas stone, a hard, porous, almost black volcanic rock, found in the neighbourhood of Esquipulas. Both the *metate* and the three legs upon which it rested, were of the

shape commonly used by the Indians after the Conquest, but not usually found amongst the older Maya, indicating that the burial was comparatively recent, that is within the last three centuries or so.

On clearing the south wall of the platform, the following objects were brought to light, all about two feet below the surface :

1. Two leg bones, probably those of a deer.
2. Pottery head, probably that of a woman, the head-dress, of remarkable height and width, being composed of coils of hair spread out on some light framework beneath.
3. A head, with head-dress closely resembling a barrister's wig.
4. A monkey's head.
5. A head with puffed-out cheeks, very like the conventional cherub.
6. A human figurine, showing one well-modelled arm and leg, the hand grasping some indeterminate object ; the rest of the plaque had been broken away.
7. A small grotesque figure of an old man.
8. A figurine, showing the *maxtli*, or apron, and legs ; the upper part had been broken away.
9. A second head with head-dress resembling a barrister's wig.

Along the north wall of the platform were found several small clay heads, and some bones of a peccari, or wild hog, also, no doubt, buried with the dead as a provision for his journey to the other world. On removing the central portion of the mound covering the top of the platform, it was found to consist of large blocks of shale and limestone, rubble, and earth. About 2ft. below the surface, just at the bottom of the topmost layer, which was composed almost

exclusively of earth and rubble, were found parts of a skeleton, consisting of both femora, one humerus, a few hand and foot bones, one upper incisor and three pre-molar teeth. The ribs, the vertebræ, the pelvis, and the skull bones were entirely missing, as in the case of the first interment found in this mound, and the two in Mound B, which caused Lady Brown to christen them the Crippen mounds, for, as she said, this extraordinary total absence of parts of the skeleton was a sure indication of dirty work in ancient times. With these bones were the following objects :

1. A small broken flint spear-head.
2. A broken obsidian knife.
3. Three shells, perforated for use as ornaments.
4. A masked face, with oblong slits for the eyes.

5. A conch shell trumpet, still in a fair state of preservation, and used that evening, after the clay had been washed out of it for the first time in centuries, to notify the Indians that it was 5 p.m., and time to leave off work. The upper incisor tooth had a piece removed from the cutting edge, so that when a similar piece was removed from the incisor in contact with it, a semi-lunar gap was left in the upper teeth. This was not at all an uncommon procedure amongst the Maya, and was apparently done from æsthetic motives. Small round plugs of jade, gold, or obsidian were often let into the front teeth for the same reason ; indeed, sometimes a tooth is found with the double decoration, a plug being inset in front, and a piece removed from the edge as well.

The second mound, B, was situated nearly mid-way between that last described and the terrace upon which my camp stood. It was 45ft. long, 25ft. broad, and 5ft. high, and had been constructed over the remains of a cut stone-faced structure belonging to the older civilisation, by adding

to the latter a cap 3ft. high composed of rubble, large stones, and earth. Almost exactly in the centre of the mound, at a depth of 3ft. below the surface, were found the remains of two human skeletons inextricably mixed together, consisting of portions of the bones of the arms, legs, feet, and hands. No trace was found of ribs, vertebræ, pelvis, sacral bones, or skulls. With the bones were found fragments of a stone corn mill and rubber, together with 2 small *orejeras*, the large circular discs worn as ear-rings by the Maya. These were made of red shell, and with each was found a rectangular piece of white shell, having perforations at opposite sides, one hole used probably, to attach it to the centre of the ear-ring, while from the other depended over the shoulder a plume of feathers, string of beads, or other pendant. With these were several fragments of clay figurines, part of a conch shell trumpet, and some broken obsidian knives. It was impossible to tell from the bones the sex of either of the individuals buried in this mound. Both were, however, young adults, and from the nature of the objects found associated with them, probably man and woman. The *metate*, or corn rubber, was undoubtedly the property of a woman, while the conch shell almost as certainly belonged to a man. These two mounds, with their contents, have been very carefully described, as they belong to a type found in some abundance in the neighbourhood of the ruin. Originally they had been small platforms faced with cut stone, erected by earlier inhabitants of the ruins, and probably forming the substructures upon which were erected wooden houses, or small temples.

Many centuries after the complete desertion of the ruins by their builders, the site was occupied by two other branches of the Maya—one coming in from Guatemala on the south, the other, consisting of remnants of the Mopan Indians,

from the neighbourhood of the Mopan river, entering from the north. This last immigration occurred three centuries (or less) ago, and the Indians concerned in it were in an extremely low state of civilisation and culture, probably bush Indians, or *Indios sublevados* (as they were called by the Spaniards), who had been driven from their homes by the latter into the fastnesses of the bush, and harried into constant shifts and changes, till they reached some place like Lubaantun, so remote that they had time to settle down permanently, and so far removed from Spanish influence as to insure them against further molestation. These Indians appear to have utilised the small stone platforms of their predecessors as burial places, as seen in mounds A and B, and probably in small groups of similar mounds in the vicinity. The platforms were converted into burial mounds by the simple expedient of heaping over them layers of mixed rubble, earth, and stone, from 2 to 4ft. thick, in which the corpses were interred. The individuals buried in these two mounds appear to have been of the lowest class. A single rude clay vessel and broken corn grinding stones were placed with the female, a conch shell, a few shell beads, a broken spear-head, and an obsidian knife with the male. The same objects are found in the possession of the few degenerate Indians who live in the neighbourhood of the ruins to-day, whose only indestructible possessions are, in the case of the woman, her *metate* and clay pots, with a few glass beads and sea shells as a necklace, and in the case of the man, his conch shell trumpet. The probabilities are, I think, that this unfortunate remnant of the Maya, robbed, ill-treated, and enslaved for years by the Spaniards, and ultimately driven for self-preservation into the remotest parts of the forest, had none of their former ornaments left, and had lost the art of manufacture of their beautiful

painted pottery and exquisitely chipped flint and obsidian objects by the time they reached Lubaantun, and that all had sunk to an equal degree into the extreme depth of poverty and destitution. The presence of so many pottery figurines, many of them showing no mean degree of technical skill in design and modelling, is somewhat peculiar, but most, if not all of them, have been cast in moulds, and it is quite possible that the little pottery clay moulds used for this purpose may have been carried about for years by their possessors, even during the most stressful time, especially as such objects could have had no attraction for the avaricious conquerors, who would hardly take the trouble to rob their owners of them. These figurines must, I think, have constituted the household gods of their owners, which would account for their being buried with them in such numbers, as the costumes and head-dresses worn by them are extraordinarily varied and elaborate, and certainly not such as would have been worn by the inhabitants of any part of the Maya area after the Spanish Conquest. In every case the figurines were broken before burial, sometimes only a few small pieces being chipped off, but more frequently the whole object was broken into a number of fragments. Amongst the Maya it was a common practice to destroy, or render useless, all objects buried with the dead. Incense-burners were smashed in pieces, pots containing food had a large hole knocked in their bottoms, and even jade and shell beads, gorgets, and other articles of personal adornment were fired in incense burners, so that they became blackened, cracked, or broken, and incapable of being re-used. This "killing" of offerings, whether made to the dead or to the gods, is well exemplified at Chichen Itza, where the innumerable objects recovered from the sacred *cenote*, or well of sacrifice, have nearly all been treated in this way. Gold

cups and ornaments have been crushed together—beautiful carved jade plaques and beads have been smashed into small fragments. Stone weapons have been broken, exquisite gold-covered wood carvings have been split up, pottery vessels shattered, in fact, every inanimate offering made has been “killed” in the same manner that the human victims offered in the *cenote* to the rain-god had first to be killed by drowning, before they became acceptable to the god, and if, as in rare instances happened, they escaped death after being thrown into the great well, it was considered that the sacrifice had been rejected by the god. It is evident, therefore, that the same idea prevailed amongst this particular branch of the Maya, and that all these little figurines had been ceremonially killed before being buried with the dead.

CHAPTER X

. Expedition in search of game—Meets with disaster—Accidental (?) shooting of a friend—A chronic loafer—An ingenious dream—Meets with no reward—Finding figurines showing European influence—Mysterious music heard in the bush—Its probable origin—Indians are ghost-haunted, spirit-obsessed people—Ideal location of camp—Game—Easily-procured supper—Indians' weird howl of triumph—Difficulty in getting men—Muddy hears of a cave—Finding an incense-burner—Dodging a tiger—Exploring a cave—Wasted trip—A mountain cow—Men will not admit why they object to work in the ruins—Maya unused to hard work—Communal labour—An open-air picnic.

TO-DAY Mitchell Hedges sent Benito, a Honduran half-breed who had been working for us as an axeman, out into the bush in search of game, with Levi, a big yellow Cayman, who had been employed as a pilot on the *Cara*. The latter had been brought to the ruins, partly because there was nothing else to do with him while we were absent from the cays, and Mitchell Hedges did not wish to lose his services as pilot, and partly as an experiment; on the whole not a successful one, as Levi, though an excellent longshore sailor and pilot, was not of much use as a bushman, and considered the routine work of camp life, such as washing pots, pans, dishes, and clothes, splitting wood, carrying water from the river, sweeping the earth floor of the hut, etc., as completely beneath his dignity, with the result that Lady Brown and Mitchell Hedges had to do most of their own cooking, cleaning, and washing, for the Kekchi girl they hired on first arriving at the ruins proved to be quite useless, and though she was supposed to possess some knowledge of English, it was only available when she wanted anything, and she relapsed into complete non-comprehension when she was

ordered to do work of any kind. We had been suffering from a straight diet of chicken and eggs for nearly three weeks, and began to feel that we should like a little change to some game, *carne del monte*, or bush meat, as the natives call it, in which we had been given to understand the surrounding forest abounded.

Levi was anxious to set out on a hunting expedition, and, as we were loth to thwart any budding tendency on his part towards usefulness, he started with Benito, each armed with a 12-bore to shoot corassow, a large bird about the size of a turkey, and very excellent eating, with whose haunts Benito asserted he was well acquainted. They left camp soon after dawn, expecting to be back laden with game for breakfast about 10 a.m. Noon arrived, but no sign of them, and when, at 5 p.m., neither had turned up, we began to get slightly anxious, and thought of sending out parties of Indians to see what had become of them. Soon after sundown, however, they arrived, footsore, bedraggled, with their clothes torn, and the soles ripped off a pair of nearly new knee-boots which Mitchell Hedges had lent Levi. They brought no game—indeed, we considered ourselves lucky to see the guns again. Their tale was that an hour or so after starting they had lost their way completely in the forest, as Benito was a poor bushman, and Levi no bushman at all. After this they appear to have wandered around in circles for hours, till they became thoroughly scared. Fortunately, at this stage they stumbled on the bed of a small stony creek, and Levi had the sense to realise that if they stuck to the creek they must at last reach the Columbia branch, and, by following this, the camp. They glued themselves to the little narrow stony bed of the creek as their only hope of salvation, and, though the going was awful, and resulted in the loss of Levi's, or rather Mitchell Hedges' boots, they

ultimately reached the Columbia branch and arrived in camp more dead than alive. Next time we wanted game we determined to send out an Indian hunter, who is as much at home in the bush as he is in his own backyard. This fiasco was not altogether Mitchell Hedges' fault for dispatching two duffers into the bush, for Levi, as I have already said, had only been sent to encourage a budding inclination towards hard work—which he certainly got—while Benito had accompanied him because no Indian could be found willing for the job, being of a highly suspicious nature, and not at all willing to accompany the armed stranger alone in the bush, in case an "accidental" shooting should occur.

This "accidental" shooting is an old Indian dodge, and I have seen it brought off on several occasions. A man comes in and reports to the authorities, with the greatest sorrow, that he has unfortunately shot a friend of his in the bush, mistaking the movement he made amongst the foliage, in the dim light of early dawn, for a deer. There are no witnesses, the man's corpse is found lying as described by the slayer in the dense scrub, where he might very well have been mistaken for a deer which had come down in the early morning to lick the salt ashes in the newly-burnt corn plantation. Crowds of witnesses are in evidence to swear that the dead man and his slayer had had no quarrel, and were on the best of terms—in fact, bosom friends—but—the authorities have seen this sort of thing occur before, and, if they care to dig down deeply enough, will probably find that some disagreement existed between the two men, usually in connection with a woman, or a pig, belonging to the one, being shot while trespassing in the corn plantation of the other; for these are the two most potent causes of offence amongst the Maya. But who are the authorities, that they should go against the overwhelming

weight of the evidence? And, in any case, were the man to be sent for trial, he would most undoubtedly be acquitted.

A chronic loafer, a citizen of one of the neighbouring Republics, who has settled on the Indian reservation, turned up one morning with a tale of a dream which had visited him for three nights in succession. I may say that, ever since he arrived, he had been trying to wangle for himself an easy job around the camp, preferably a sinecure, with food and good pay attached; finding at last that this was a hopeless proposition, as the only job we could find for him was the usual one of bush-chopping or shovel-wielding at a dollar a day, with beans and corn cake at midday thrown in, he at last took himself off, and, as nothing had been seen of him for a week, I hoped that he had departed for good. He turned up again, however, with the following ingenious tale of a dream. For three nights running there had appeared, he said, by the side of his hammock a woman and two men, all dressed as ancient Mayas of the upper class used to dress, the woman in elaborately embroidered *huipil*, or blouse, and *pik*, or skirt, with bracelets, gorgets, and pendants of green jade, and decorated sandals, the men in feather-work cloaks, embroidered aprons, and elaborate head-dresses, surmounted by animals' heads. They were very solemn and stately, and took no notice of him, though they conversed freely amongst themselves in Maya, which he understood.

The woman said: "How terrible to have these accursed foreigners disturbing our bones and our treasure. To-day they dug up the burial mound of my daughter and her husband, and, if they dig into the pyramids which they are now cleaning, they must discover the burial chamber of the high priest, your brother, and rob it of its treasure."

To this the elder of the men replied: "What you say is

true, daughter, but I am indeed thankful that they can never disturb my remains, nor rob my treasure, which are buried in Peten of the Itzas, where no foreigner can ever find them. Nevertheless, may the curse of all the gods rest on them for ever."

On this, the younger man interjected: "The curse of the gods is already upon them, unless they avert it by employing in their evil work that native gentleman to whom we appear."

This was really a most ingenious piece of fiction, and showed considerable imagination and dramatic instinct on the part of its inventor, whose own words I have given as nearly as I can remember them. He probably deserved a kinder fate than the one which overtook him in being booted, empty-handed, out of camp, without having been able to borrow as much as a dime, an ounce of tea, or a pound of sugar. But that he was in no way disheartened was shown by his return, bright and early, next morning, trying to borrow a machete, as he said he had just broken his own.

I purchased from two Indians a whistle in the shape of a horse, with the head broken off, of pinkish, smooth pottery, and a second in the shape of an old, fat, bearded man, with what looks like a pewter pot held in one hand, wearing a mitred collar, and kilt-like garment girded round his waist. Both these whistles were found by the Indians on the surface of the earth in making their corn plantations. The horse was accompanied by a broken corn-rubber. Both show quite obviously Spanish influence, as the horse was unknown to the Indians, and the man is clad in mediæval European costume. The size of the objects, the method of forming whistles by prolonging the backs of the figurines into mouthpieces, and the general design, were almost exactly similar to those which we had already recovered from the

mounds, and from Indians who have discovered them on the surface of the ground, the inference being that the Indian whistle figurine was used after the Conquest to depict costumes introduced by the Spaniards.

One of the most generally accepted traditions amongst the Indians who live in the vicinity is that music is frequently to be heard at the ruins. Indeed, almost all of them assert that they have heard it at one time or another. I was therefore considerably startled myself to hear, one windy morning when standing in the plaza of the burial mound, what sounded distinctly like a weird, sad, complaining sort of musical sound ; on tracing this to its source, however, I found that there was nothing supernatural about it, as it came from a small group of large trees, from which depended great hawser-like tendrils of liana, and the curious musical noises were produced, apparently, by the rubbing together of the dry branches, and the swaying of the liana against them by the rather high wind which was blowing.

The Indians of the neighbourhood are a poor, feeble, anæmic, degenerate race, representing the last step of the once great Maya people along the road to extinction. Living, as they do, amongst the tombs of their ancestors, whose remains for fifty generations surround them on all sides, over whose graves they make their corn plantations year after year, amongst the ruins of whose stupendous cities they constantly wander, is it to be wondered at that they are a ghost-haunted, spirit-obsessed people, living more in the past than in the present, concerned more with the spirits of the dead than with the living, and that they dream dreams, see visions, and hear sounds not of this world—that the dense forest is peopled for them rather with the shades of the countless dead, who occupied it for nearly 2,000 years, than with the small, and rapidly vanishing, mournful little

remnant, who seem to be only awaiting patiently the fulfilment of the time when the last Maya shall have joined his forefathers, and complete silence settled over the dense veil of immemorial bush which shrouds the temples and palaces, the cities and the monoliths, where once flourished a vast population, and the highest aboriginal civilisation ever known in the New World?

The location of my camp was a perfectly ideal one, situated on the great terrace forming the southern approach to the city, bounded on either hand by *barrancos* forty feet deep, at the bottom of each of which runs a stream of beautiful clear, limpid water. It commanded a magnificent view over the hills and valleys to the east and west, while to the north it was dominated by the citadel of the ancient city, and to the south sloped down to the Columbia branch of the Rio Grande, and the burial places of the people of the later occupation. Parrots and pigeons flew over morning and evening on the daily trip from the roosting to the feeding place, and vice versa. Chichalaca could be heard calling in the bush at all hours, and during our first night a couple of wild hog wandered in, probably to lick the salt ashes of the small fire which had boiled our supper-tea. I could sit at my door in the morning, or as dusk was coming on, and bag a parrot or pigeon for breakfast or supper without moving, just as at Cozumel one could stand at the back door of the house overlooking the sea, shoot a cast-net out, and catch a meal of snapper without leaving the house. One of the weirdest of the many weird noises of the bush is the curious shriek given by the Indians, which so exactly resembles that made by a variety of large hawk that at first I frequently mistook one for the other; it is apparently intended as a cry of rejoicing, as it always follows the two most joyful sounds known to the Indian worker, the crash of a giant tree felled

in clearing the bush for the corn plantation, and the sound of the conch shell trumpet which lets excavators know every evening that it is time to quit work for the day ; but a more doleful and uncanny sound, as it goes reverberating over the bush, it is impossible to imagine, especially when it is taken up by other parties of Indians working in the vicinity, and echoes with a long-drawn-out, melancholy cadence across the little valley.

One day Muddy rode over to San Antonio, a small Indian village about fifteen miles from the ruins, to try and engage more men. He had also heard of a cave in the vicinity, in which, two years ago, an Indian found a fine pottery incense-burner. The account of this find was somewhat curious. The man was out hunting in the bush, when he accidentally came across a narrow opening in the hillside. On approaching he saw, a few yards within the entrance, a strange-looking object, of whose nature in the subdued light of the narrow mouth he could not be sure. He also saw something else, as to the significance of which there was no doubt in his mind whatever, namely, the fresh slot of small jaguar on the earth washed down from above, covering the ledge in front of the cave's mouth. These tracks entered the cave, but did not emerge. The Indian went off into the bush, cut a long sapling with a hook at the end, and, holding his loaded gun in front of him with one hand, in case the jaguar should take it into his head to make a sudden bolt, he very carefully and gradually pulled the incense-burner towards him with the crook of the stick, till at last he was able to grasp it. I had seen this find, and sent Muddy to investigate, as I myself was still unable to ride.

On arriving at San Antonio, the official drum was beaten, and the conch shell sounded, a signal to all the men of the village to turn up at the *cabildo*. This they did, and

Muddy explained to them the big wages and easy work awaiting them at the ruin, whereupon twelve men at once volunteered to come over and start work the following morning.

Having made this satisfactory arrangement, he set forth for the cave, guided by the Indian who had discovered it. They travelled on foot, and had to cut a path every yard of the way through the dense bush. Arrived at the opening, they found no animal tracks on the soil, so, getting down on hands and knees, with the flashlight in one hand and his gun at full cock in the other, Muddy crawled in through the narrow neck of passage in the rock which gave entrance to the main cave. This act really required a very considerable amount of pluck on his part, as he is not naturally of a reckless and intrepid disposition, and was momentarily expecting to encounter at close quarters a puma, jaguar, or other equally objectionable animal, whose dwelling he was invading. On reaching the end of the passage he found himself in a comparatively small chamber, about 40ft. by 20ft., hollowed out by the action of water in the limestone rock. The floor was covered with a thin layer of earth, in which were embedded numerous potsherds, but beyond these the cave did not contain a single human artifact, and obviously, if any incense-burners had ever been there beside the one first discovered at the entrance, they had been since removed, an extremely unlikely contingency, as the cave had probably never been visited since the original Indian left the incense-burner behind him as an offering to his gods. On leaving the cave, they almost ran into a tapir, but were so flustered that he had nearly got out of sight in the dense bush before the guide fired at him. He was certainly hit, as they found the bush sprinkled with blood, but, though they followed the trail up to the

creek where the tapir had plunged in, they lost it there, and never got sight of him again. The guide, who had volunteered to take Muddy back by a much shorter and easier route, guaranteed to get them in soon after midday, but, instead, he lost his way completely, and late in the evening came out on a trail leading to another small village, at a point miles away from San Antonio.

Of the twelve men who had promised Muddy to turn up to work, but a single one put in an appearance next day, and he was a native constable of the *Alcalde*, who had been paid a fee for rounding up labourers, and probably felt in duty bound, under the circumstances, to provide at least one man—himself. We could very well have dispensed with him, however, as he was a wretched, anæmic, withered-up little specimen, who would, I could see, make far more frequent use of the medicine-chest than of the machete and axe. It was impossible to discover from the men their real objection to working at the ruins. We increased the pay and shortened the hours, and yet our gang, which had reached fourteen, was reduced to four. The excuse usually given was that they must go and attend to the cutting of their plantations, but this would not hold water, as a great many of them had already finished these, and still would not join our gang. Superstition might have something to do with it, as they certainly do not like digging up what appear to be comparatively recent bones, accompanied by such objects as conch shell trumpets, beads, and pottery vessels, for it looks too like rooting in one of their own cemeteries. It is more probable, however, that they regard the regular hours which they have to work for us as too like hard labour, to which they are totally unaccustomed. The nearest approach they ever attempt to work is felling the bush to make *milpa*, and this is done communally.

When a man is about to start felling he gives all his neighbours notice, and they collect at his home early in the morning, to the number of perhaps ten or a dozen, where they are regaled by the women with coffee and corn lob ; from there they proceed leisurely to the *milpa*, where, all in a lump, within convenient conversational distance, they start cutting bush with their machetes, taking it quite easily, and stopping frequently to smoke a cigarette or have a drink, laughing and chatting all the time. At mid-day the women arrive with a large pot of stewed chicken, corn cake, and beans, round which everybody sits in picnic fashion, chatting and smoking afterwards for an hour or so ; then, in the afternoon, a couple of hours' more leisurely chopping is done, and the day's entertainment is over. This may last four or five days, and is really nothing but an extended picnic, in which each man does as much or as little work as he feels inclined for, and is fed on the fat of the land by the owner of the *milpa*. Nobody is paid, but, to counterbalance this, each in turn helps the others make their *milpas*, and enjoys the opportunity of an outing, unusually good food, and unlimited conversation. Everything was done by the ancient Maya in this communal way, fishing, hunting, agriculture, and house-building, the result being that for probably 1,500 years prior to the coming of the Spaniards they never knew what really hard work was. Money was unknown to them, everyone had enough good food and clothes, and a suitable house ; concerts, dances, and dramatic entertainments were frequent, and free to all, as were ceremonial debauches on *balchè*, an intoxicating liquor made from fermented corn and certain roots ; their lives were in fact almost ideally happy, a minimum amount of work with a maximum amount of pleasure, no poverty, and no excessive wealth, for as they used no money, and

the land was held in common, it was impossible to accumulate wealth except in the form of beautiful and artistic jewellery, or elaborately-decorated pottery, in fact, an almost ideal agrarian communism. Amongst these Lubaantun Indians the communistic spirit seems to have survived to some extent, probably because they succeeded in evading the Spanish domination very soon after the Conquest, by retiring to this remote spot, where they and their descendants have lived undisturbed up to the present day.



MAYA CHILD. JADE CARVING, 1,500 YEARS OLD



HEAD OF LITTLE MAYA GIRL OF 6 YEARS

CHAPTER XI

Two Maya dialects spoken around Lubaantun—Indians' mode of life little altered in last three centuries—Old village sites frequently found in the bush—Difficulty in junking great trees, too large to burn—The local *Alcalde's* court—Commonsense tribunal—Two cases involving the eternal triangle—Indians' idea of Holy Week—Cortez' route from Mexico to Omoa, passes near Lubaantun—José Tosh, my Kekchi boy—A wake, or *velorio*—Curious funeral customs—Incense-burners—Objects buried with the dead, and their functions—Objects buried with women now and in former times—Curious names of Indians and their meanings—Traces of totemism still surviving—Stung by scorpions—Hedges' scorpion sting—Visit of the Marching Army—The menace of the insect world.

Two dialects of Maya are spoken by the Indians of the neighbourhood, Kekchi, and the Maya of Peten, and I think there can be very little doubt but that the Kekchi element migrated in from Guatemala, while the true Maya are a remnant of the Mopan Indians, who escaped south after the conquest of Itza by the Spaniards, towards the end of the seventeenth century. It is probable that the small burial mounds which we opened were built by these immigrants and their descendants, and that the region round Lubaantun has been sparsely settled by bush Indians for the past three or four centuries, during which period their customs and mode of life have altered singularly little; indeed, except for the fact that the gas-pipe shot-gun has superseded the bow and arrow, the machete has taken the place of the stone axe, and Roman Catholicism has been added to the worship of their old gods, they are at the present day in very much the same cultural horizon as were their ancestors four centuries ago, when Alvorado overthrew

Guatemala, and the natives became the slaves of their Spanish Conquerors.

It is quite a common experience to encounter in this bush a few plum or mamia trees, and cacao, cotton, or coffee bushes ; just a remnant, stunted, and nearly exterminated in their losing struggle with the ever-encroaching bush, but sure indication that at one time this was the site of an Indian settlement, whose palm-thatched wooden huts have long ago turned into vegetal mould, in no way different from that formed by the death and decay of the constantly renewed forest which surrounded them. Usually in these situations a few small burial mounds are found, the meagre contents of which indicate people in a very low cultural state as their builders.

Our gang was reduced to four men, all of whom we put on felling bush in and around the citadel, as we wanted to get the bush burnt in three or four weeks at the outside, over this, the most important part, of the ruins, and it would require at least three weeks to dry, so that we might obtain a sufficiently good burn to leave the buildings clear enough for photographic purposes. Later, more men turned up, all of whom were put to bush felling, though we were greatly disappointed at having no mound excavation going on, especially as we had discovered very likely looking small hills in the low-lying land both to the east and west of the main group, which were almost certainly small sepulchral mounds. The enormous Santa Maria, wild cotton, and chichem trees which were first felled, had completely blocked up what I call the "via sacra," or broad avenue leading through the citadel due north and south, the amphitheatre, and the sides of all the pyramids, and now we had to get them cut into lengths and cleared to one side, so as not to interfere with a clear view of the stone structures, for it would take at least six months of dry weather to get these

great trunks in a fit state to burn. This was a very arduous business, and it took fully three or four times as long to cut each trunk into logs and roll them out of the way as it did to fell the trees.

We attended one or two sessions of the *Alcalde's* Court at the village while here, and if not quite so imposing as our own High Courts, it is at least an eminently commonsense and practical tribunal, presided over by a man who is thoroughly conversant with the psychology and methods of thought of the people with whom he has to deal. Moreover, our own courts, with their bewigged and gowned lawyers and judges, and their frequently hoary and mediæval methods of procedure, gathered like moss during the passing centuries, would probably appear just as quaint to the Maya as do their courts to us. Then the court of the *Alcalde* is not lacking in a certain dignity, when one observes with what solemnity the people approach it, and remembers that the procedure is pretty much the same now as it was in the days when our own ancestors' tribunals were presided over by a gentleman clad in skins, an oak leaf wreath, and underclothing consisting of a coat of blue woad. *Alcaldes'* Courts are pretty much the same amongst the Indians all over Central America, and I will describe two cases which came under my notice, in both of which the punishments appeared to me to fit the crime very neatly if they were somewhat unconventional from our point of view. Both, I may say, had to do with the eternal triangle, a fruitful cause of trouble amongst the Indians, usually referred to the *Alcalde* for arbitration, unless the machete or gun have previously been called in as arbiters.

In the first case, it appeared that a young man had arrived in the village the previous evening from a neighbouring settlement, with a full bottle of native rum. He encountered

one of the lads of the village, an old friend of his, who was taking his girl for a *paseo* after the day's work was finished, and suggested that they all take a little refreshment, which they proceeded to do. After the second or third drink, Juan, the owner of the rum, began to realise what an extremely pretty girl Petrona was, and determined, if possible, to separate her from his friend Julio, and annex her for himself. With this object in view he dispatched Julio to his house on a fool's errand, and meanwhile adjourned with Petrona to a secluded spot, where they sat down to finish the rum in comfort. Julio, returning, found his friend and his sweetheart gone, and setting out to look for them, soon spotted them in their retreat. He departed on the run to his house, on a genuine errand this time, returning speedily with a loaded gun, and blood in his eye. Fortunately, just as he was going to avenge his wrong on the faithless pair, he was seen by one of the native constables, who promptly disarmed him and hauled him off to the *calabosa*, where he spent the night. Next morning he was brought up before the *Alcalde*, charged with carrying a dangerous weapon in the streets with intent to slay his friend and sweetheart, both of whom gave evidence against him. He was promptly fined three dollars, and given three days imprisonment. Julio having been led off to gaol, Juan and Petrona were retiring together wreathed in smiles, when they were sharply recalled by the *Alcalde*, who remarked that the case was by no means finished yet.

"You," he said to Juan, "are more to blame than Julio, first because you brought rum into the village, which was illegal, and secondly because you tried to get your friend's girl for yourself, which was immoral, so you will go to gaol for four days and be fined four dollars. You," he said to Petrona, "are the worst of the three, because you were the

cause of all this trouble, and were willing to leave your sweetheart for a drink of rum, and so you will also go to gaol for four days, and be fined four dollars."

The end of the business was that Julio paid his fine, and an extra dollar in lieu of the 3 days in gaol. Juan hypothecated a gold ring with the *Alcalde* till he could get the money, and the unfortunate Petrona having no money, and deserted by both her faithless lovers, was the only one to suffer, for she was consigned to the *calabosa*, where she remained, refusing either to eat or work, till her father, who lived some way off, came in and paid her fine.

The second case was that of an Indian who had married a wife, by whom he had two children, and getting tired of the responsibility of married life had hied him off to the Republic of Guatemala, where he remained for six years. At the end of this period he returned to his native village purposing to take up matrimony where he had left it, but in this he was disappointed, as he found that his wife had gone to live with another man, a Honduranee. He promptly complained to the *Alcalde*, who ordered the lady to return to her first husband, which she did, though with considerable reluctance, as she had tired of her lawful lord, and was rather fond of her second venture. Love laughs at locksmiths, however, and, in the absence of the husband, the lover was constantly snooping around the house, and meeting the woman by day in secluded spots in the bush. This naturally very soon came to the husband's ears, as kind and over-officious neighbours are just as plentiful in Maya villages as in more highly civilised communities, and he again appealed to the *Alcalde*. The latter called the woman, the husband, and the lover before him, and gave his decision in the form of an ultimatum.

"You," he said to the lover, "will never speak to this

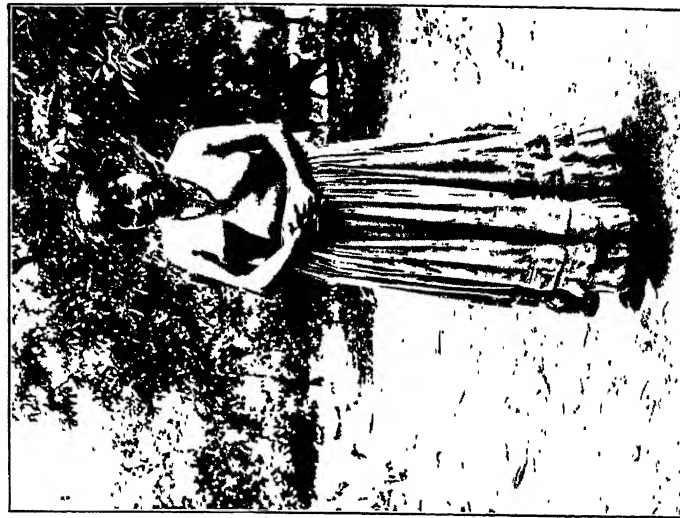
woman again ; even if you meet her on the street, you will turn round and go the opposite way, and if you don't accept this warning you will at once go to gaol. You," speaking to the woman "will return with your husband, and have nothing whatever to do with this man, for if you do, you will be driven out of the village at once, and never allowed to return. I have enough to do without having to deal with a murder case, for which I see you are trying to let me in."

The *Cabildo*, or combined Court house, Municipal building, guest house for strangers, and dance hall, is a large, cool, airy room with thatched roof, walls of adobe, and a hard floor of beaten earth. The *Alcalde*, a little wizened, wrinkled, dried-up Indian, sits at a high wooden table on a tall native made mahogany chair with his long silver tipped official staff beside him. On each side are the second *Alcalde* and native constables ; onlookers are accommodated on low forms down the side of the room, and the prisoners are brought up in front of the table for trial. The proceedings are always quiet and decorous, and accepted by all parties as final. The only disturbance which ever arises is from an occasional drunk, who is lodged in the *calabosa*, a small cell adjoining the Court, from which it is only separated by a grille of sticks through which the rum-inspired drunk may sometimes be heard making insulting remarks about the Court, which he usually has reason to regret sincerely when he sobers up. When one puts up as a guest at the *Cabildo* for the night, the propinquity of this same drunken Indian in the *calabosa* is a constant source of annoyance, for the joyous stage of intoxication as expressed by song, whoop, and howl, seems to last much longer amongst the Indians than amongst other races.

We were anxious to get our men to work the first three



KEKCHI GIRLS AND CHILDREN



KEKCHI INDIAN GIRL

days in Holy Week, so as to have the citadel cleared before Easter. These people seem to have an entirely wrong conception as to the significance of Holy Week, for they keep it as a holiday ; drinking, feasting, and dancing, and on Good Friday one of the principal *fiestas* of the year, known as the "Cortez dance," is brought off at a little village in the vicinity named "Aguacate."

Cortez, on his wonderful march from Mexico City to Omoa undoubtedly crossed the south-western corner of British Honduras, and no doubt came in contact with the predecessors of these Indians. Tradition amongst the Indians says that this dance has been handed down direct from their ancestors of four centuries ago, in commemoration of the visit of the conqueror of Mexico, but it is probable that the characters, with their elaborate costumes and dances, have undergone a considerable amount of change and modification during the centuries that have elapsed since it was first introduced.

I was obliged to send my Spanish servant back to Belize, as he was not used to the bush, and was so frequently ill that he became more of a liability than an asset. In his place I engaged, to help Muddy, a small Kekchi Indian named José Tosh, who had very little knowledge of any language but his own, but was an extremely bright and intelligent little chap. He did not, of course, know how old he was, but though he did not look twelve years of age, his mother thought he must be around 15, after an elaborate effort of memory in placing his birth, either before or after various events, mostly calamitous, known to both of us, such as the great hurricane, the dry wet season, which resulted in the loss of all the corn, and an epidemic which carried off half the population of the village. I was able more or less to civilise him in many ways, but from two things I could not

divorce him. He would not take off his old palm leaf hat either in or out of the house, and I sometimes thought he slept in it. It was a most disreputable article, much too large, coming right down to the nape of his neck, and kept on by having one ear inserted, like a button, through a hole cut for the purpose in its side. Nor would he be separated for a moment from his little machete, which hung by his side in its scabbard, whether he was waiting at table, cleaning the house, running errands, or even taking a siesta in the hammock.

A man having died in the village, he was *veloriod* or "waked" next night. He had a good many relatives, so quite a feast was provided for the occasion—sweet bread, chicken, hot chocolate, and lots of rum. I should think almost every man and woman in the village turned up at some period of the proceedings to partake of free food and drink. The funeral was held next morning, a very simple affair. The corpse, dressed in his everyday clothes, with his machete in its scabbard still strapped to his side, was placed on a sort of stretcher of boughs and palm leaves, and borne by four of his friends to the cemetery; there he was deposited in the shallow grave which had already been dug, and by his side were placed a calabash full of ground cacao, a small pottery incense-burner half full of gum copal incense, and his conch shell trumpet; the earth was then shovelled in over him. No coffin was used, and no burial service of any sort said. The bowls of these incense-burners, one of which is buried with every adult, are of exactly the same shape as those still used by the Lacandon Indians of the Usumasintla, the most primitive of the Maya tribes still surviving, who frankly and openly worship their ancient gods. The only difference between them is that the Lacandon *incensario* has the face of the god, in *appliqué*,

decorating the outside of the bowl, or at least two ear plugs as a conventional representation of the face, while the Kekchi have decorated their *incensarios* with a dome-like structure consisting of 3 branches, which meet above the rim to form a handle. The machete, I was told, was to protect the man from enemies on his journey to the next world, and to cut his way where the road is difficult, while the calabash of cacao was to provide him with food for the journey.

When a woman dies she is buried without coffin, in her ordinary clothes, with a pair of slippers, some clean towels, and some of her bead and shell jewellery ; if she has any gold or silver jewellery, however, it is usually kept by her relatives, but if she has no kin, it also is buried with her. By her side are placed her other possessions, and, as in the man's case, an *incensario* half full of burnt incense. Her *metate*, or corn grinder, and household pottery are never buried with her. In the case of the death of one of the majordomos of the church, all his possessions are buried with him, and beside his calabash of cacao are placed several clean napkins for him to wipe his hands and mouth after drinking.

It will be seen that the objects buried with the dead are almost exactly the same as those which we found in the small burial mounds—conch trumpet, weapons, ornaments, and food bowl, the main difference being that clay figurines of their gods accompanied the older burials, the art of manufacturing which has been 'lost' by the modern semi-Christianised Indians, while the fashion of burying with the housewife her *metate* and domestic pottery has evidently become obsolete, possibly because women no longer take the same interest and pride in the purely domestic side of their life that they did in former days, but more probably because the people have become more materialistic, with

a less firmly rooted faith in the future life, and consequently more loth to part with valuable household belongings, which might be wasted on the dead, but are certainly difficult to obtain, or make, and extremely valuable to the living.

These Indians have curious names, all of them with some meaning, as Pec (stone), Pop (meat), Mai (tobacco), Kok (hicatee, or water turtle), Cheen (mosquito), Cuck (squirrel), Toot (pigeon), Col (necklace), Chun (whitelime), Tab (wasp), Canti (snake), Kal (milpa), Che (root), Ac (new), Sol (flute), Rax (raw). Animal names are quite common, as Mosquito, Squirrel, Pigeon, Snake, &c., and are also found amongst the northern Maya of Yucatan, such names as Can (snake), Pek (dog), Ceh (deer), being of frequent occurrence. These names probably represent the last survival of a totemistic system, which has been in use from the earliest times amongst the Maya of the Old Empire, when head-dresses were worn containing the heads of various animals, as the jaguar, peccari, snake, wild turkey, hawk, &c., showing to which of these families the individual belonged. Traces of the same totemistic system are also to be observed amongst the pottery figurines found in the small burial mounds at Lubaantun, where the heads of the snake, vulture, and bat are found as the chief components of head-dresses. In burial mounds scattered over the northern part of British Honduras, most of the *incensarios*, which they usually contain, are decorated outside with elaborately ornamented human figures, nearly all of whose head-dresses contain the head of an animal, bird, or reptile, prominently displayed.

While moving some newspapers left on the floor of my house, I was stung on the finger by a scorpion. Fortunately, he was only a small one, not much over an inch long; still, the finger swelled to about twice its natural size, and was very painful for the rest of the day. It was, I should say,

about comparable to a good brisk English wasp's sting. I have on several occasions seen people stung by large, vigorous scorpions, three to four inches long, and the results have always been serious ; great pain and swelling around the part stung, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, faintness, and a heaviness of the tongue, all lasting some considerable time. One Indian girl, anæmic and debilitated as the result of chronic malaria, nearly died from the effects, and was only brought round by liberal doses of brandy and a hypodermic of strychnine, and did not fully recover for a week. It was rather curious that I should have been stung by the only scorpion I encountered in my house, whereas Lady Brown was not stung at all, and Mitchell Hedges only once, though they killed thirty-one scorpions and eleven tarantulas in their dwelling. It must, however, be admitted that Mitchell Hedges' sting was of a much more painful character, and in a more vulnerable situation than mine, as a large scorpion nested in his riding-breeches, but did not get in its dastardly work till it was actually sat upon, the first intimation we had of the catastrophe being the sudden leap of Mitchell Hedges from his seat, like a Jack-in-the-box, with a yell of mingled surprise and agony. Both he and Lady Brown became very wary in handling objects which might harbour scorpions and on two occasions were rewarded by shaking large ones out of their boots before putting them on, while Mitchell Hedges discovered one reposing in his hat just in time to refrain from picking it up. The hut in which they lived was an ancient one, which had been used for many years as a dwelling by the Indian who lived next door, till he built a superior one. Its most recent use was as a pig-sty and fowl-house, and, as the floor was of soft earth, not even covered with the usual coat of marl beaten down hard, it may be imagined what it was like. The thatch roof, being

very old and rotten was, of course, the dwelling-place of innumerable scorpions, cockroaches, spiders, and other small vermin, but, fortunately for them, soon after Lady Brown and Mitchell Hedges took up their abode there, it was visited by what is known as the "marching army." Large brown ants, in regular military formation, march steadily through the bush in interminable procession, their serried lines kept in order apparently by generals and officers of lesser degree. Nothing stops them; nothing can resist them. The numbers of all the armies of the Great War would be as a drop in the ocean compared to theirs. One may fight them with flaming torches of palm-leaf, with buckets of water, with flails. Millions are slain, but billions come fearlessly on, and march over the corpses to their objective. Their march through the bush is almost silent, yet, if one listens carefully, a very faint and ominous rustling may be heard, the combined result of the movement of millions of tiny feet. Insects probably recognise this sound, as in the van of the army is always a zone of beetles, crickets, spiders, and other bugs, scuttling off to safety as fast as their legs will carry them. No other experience, not even being chased by a swarm of angry hornets—for these do not possess the terrible fearlessness, and uncanny pertinacity, of the ant—can bring home to one so vividly what the insect world could do were their numbers to increase out of due proportion. On reaching a house the regular lines of the army are split up into open formation, and foraging commences. Every nook and corner of the place, from the topmost leaf of the roof to the smallest crack in the floor, is meticulously searched, and woe to the animal or insect who has failed to make its escape in time. The roof rains cockroaches, scorpions, small lizards, and occasionally a whip-snake, but in landing they only exchange the Scylla

of the roof for the Charybdis of the floor, and in a twinkling they are a writhing brown mass of adherent ants, and in no time all that is left is a small, cleanly picked skeleton, or the hard outer cases of scorpions or cockroaches. Birds in cages suffer a similar fate, as do small mammals, and one trembles to think what would be the fate of a man imprisoned where escape was impossible, in the path of this terrible, irresistible insect river; he would inevitably be slowly eaten alive, leaving nothing but a bare skeleton to tell the tale.

CHAPTER XII

Men work first three days in *Semana Santa*—Parrots getting wild—Time-fuse cigars—Difference between Northern Maya and Kekchi—Thriftlessness of Kekchi—A Kekchi orchestra—Hiring the *Alcalde*—Medical treatment of labourers' families only, procures many "volunteers"—A pathetic case—The mountain and the mouse—Fatality which hangs over those who excavate ancient graves—We all three suffer—The open, salubrious country of ancient times, now bush-covered and unhealthy—The Cortez dance at Aguacate—Origin of the dance—Dramatis personæ—The Plot—Not suitable for a London theatre, as the play lasts for six hours—Weird and grotesque music—Light refreshments provided during the performance—A second funeral, with curious ceremonies—Death regarded without fear or repugnance by the Kekchi—Happy release from an unattractive life—The ceremony at the cemetery—Absence of old people amongst the Indians.

WITH great difficulty we were able to persuade eight men to work during the three first days of Holy Week, as they contended that these should really be kept as days of *fiesta*, with dancing and rum. These eight, however, were very hard up, and had not enough to purchase much of a good time for a whole week, so they undertook to work for the first three days, and concentrate on the celebration for the last three, when they would be able to have a hectic time, with the little they had before added to the three dollars each got for working for the first half of the week. We had cleared almost the whole of the citadel by now—not a bad piece of work considering the tremendous and unexpected handicaps we ran up against in the unreliability of the labour, and, indeed, the difficulty in obtaining men to work at any price. We shot parrots nearly every morning as they flew over, but now it was becoming more and more difficult to get within range of them, as they took to flying

over at least a hundred yards up, and only settled in the very highest trees, where they were completely out of range. The only way we could procure any for the pot was to send out an Indian, with his old piece of gas-pipe, who waited patiently under the trees where they fed till he got a pot shot at close range—unsportsmanlike, but parrot is the best game obtainable, and one must have a change from straight chicken and canned meat.

The workmen, as well as their women, all smoke home-rolled cigars, made of home-grown tobacco, which smells like a time-fuse, and tastes like nothing on earth—for I tried one. They never smoke the brown paper cigarettes, made of dried powdered tobacco mixed with dried leaves of various bush plants, so much affected by the northern Maya. It is remarkable how widely these two branches of the Maya differ from each other, considering that they belong to the same race, live in practically the same environment, and in places their territories are actually in contact.

The northern Maya make innumerable drinks from maize—*pinole* from parched ground maize, *chacasacan* from dried ground maize, *posole* from new corn, etc.; the Kekchi use cacao as a drink exclusively, and, as they take it unsweetened, without milk, and thickened with a powder made by grinding up unused scraps of corn cake, it is one of the most unpalatable drinks imaginable. The northern Maya weeds his corn, and looks after it carefully till harvest time; the Kekchi burns the bush, shoves the seed in, and then simply leaves it to Providence whether the crop is a success or not. The Kekchi seems to be without ambition, and not to have any particular use for money except to gratify the immediate need of the moment—in fact, I doubt whether a single plutocrat exists in the village who could,

in the most pressing emergency, raise fifty dollars on his worldly possessions. The northern Maya are, on the other hand, sometimes quite thrifty, and one meets an occasional small capitalist amongst them who may even go so far as to buy a little tract of land from the Government, and start a small plantation of his own. The Kekchi, in fact, has descended the ladder of degeneration several steps lower than his northern brother, and has got uncommonly close to the bottom.

I purchased the instruments of a Kekchi orchestra, consisting of a harp, made of a small, hollowed-out mahogany log, which could also be used by the player as a quite effective drum, with strings constructed, according to their size, of various fibres obtained in the bush ; with this were a guitar-like instrument, the body made from a large gourd ; a flute, hollowed from a piece of cedar, with a mouthpiece of dry palm-leaf, which required constant manipulation, and had to be frequently renewed, and a really excellent imitation of a violin. These instruments are very rarely sold, for they give the Indians an immense amount of trouble to manufacture, as, with the exception of a knife and machete, they possess no tools, and I was very fortunate in obtaining the whole set, which I got from one of our labourers. His father, it appeared, had been a celebrated musician, a sort of Steinway in the manufacture of musical instruments, and he had brought his three sons up to form a little family orchestra. The old man had died a few months before our arrival, and the three boys were so grieved at their loss that they had not the heart to get another harpist to take their father's place, and carry on with the orchestra, so determined to dispose of all the instruments at the first available opportunity.

Even in their music the Kekchi differ from the northern

Maya, for whereas they confine themselves almost exclusively to stringed instruments and the flute, those of the north rarely use any instrument but the *marimba*, or xylophone, which is said to have originated in Africa, whence it was carried by slaves to the West Indies and Spanish Main, and has now become probably the most popular single instrument in use amongst the native races of Central America. The eldest boy was genuinely affected, as, having carried the great harp—it stands nearly six feet high—into my little bush shanty, he tightened the strings and played a few last chords, and the tears chased each other down his cheeks when he told me what a great musician his father had been, how the neighbours used to drop in at night when the day's work in the *milpa* was done, the insects and sweat had been washed off, and supper was over—how the men used nearly to fill the little hut, dimly lit by the light of a couple of native black wax candles, squatting on their haunches on the floor, according to the Indian method, each with his small calabash of cacao, while the old man played their native tunes. He even showed me the last little repair he had made on the instrument before he died, and then, evidently overcome by these sad memories, rushed out of the hut, taking leave for the last time of the old harp, with which were associated so many tender memories.

We were successful in hiring the *Alcalde* himself at an advance of twenty-five cents per day on the wages paid the other men—not an extravagant price for the chief executive and principal law officer of the village, combining, as he does, in his own person more or less the offices of Governor and Chief Justice. He was hired in a purely supervisory capacity, to visit the different groups of men who were excavating, and see that none of them were

loafing on the job. Were we to did this, and venture to remonstrate with a lazy Maya, the probability would be that he would not turn up at all to work next day, but the *Alcalde* has ways and means of persuading him that this is not the proper spirit in which to accept criticism. He made but one stipulation when being engaged, and that was that his work was not to commence till Tuesday, the 14th, his reason being that his court would be so crowded on Monday with "drunk and disorderlies," who had been engaged in the celebration of Holy Week, that it would be impossible for him to get away on that day.

More and more sick people came in daily for treatment, and we found that the rule to treat gratis only labourers working for us, and their immediate relatives, worked very satisfactorily, as on at least two occasions a grown-up son of the house "volunteered" for work—inspired by his father, with the big stick in the background—in order to obtain treatment, in one case for his small sister, and in the second for his mother. It is, however, usually impossible to refuse treatment, even when no member of the family could be found to make vicarious payment. One man—himself a mere bag of hookworm and malaria—carried his little girl in twenty long miles through the bush from a small settlement to the west of Lubaantun; both of them were in the last stage of exhaustion, and could hardly stagger up the terrace to my hut, but, after a meal of chicken *tomale* and coffee, they bucked up tremendously, and the little girl even raised the pale shadow of a smile as she patted her tummy, where an immense spleen so filled it as, hardly, one would think, to leave even room enough for the coffee and *tomale*. Well, one couldn't very well send a couple like this away without doing something for them. The man was really grateful, and from long experience, I knew



RUINED STAIRWAY AND BUSH LADDER



SIDE OF GREAT PYRAMID

when my fee for medicine and attendance was being extracted from the ragged old shot-bag he carried over his shoulder. It was a good-sized parcel, done up in a bit of palm-leaf, and neatly tied with cuhoon-leaf fibre ; beneath this came a wrapping of wild plantain-leaf ; and lastly a corn husk, in which reposed—one egg ! But this one egg probably represented as much to the owner as a three-guinea consultation fee paid in Harley Street, and was accepted accordingly.

It almost seemed as if there were something in the popular superstition that ill fortune, or at least sickness, and not infrequently some unpleasant kind of death, dog the footsteps of those archæologists and ethnologists engaged in the excavation of ruined cities, and, incidentally, in disturbing the sepulchres of the ancient great buried within them. Mitchell Hedges and myself had both been more or less incapacitated for several weeks in Lubaantun, and, unfortunately, both together, so that we had been unable for a time to supervise personally the work of excavation ; even Lady Brown, usually a host in herself both in the matter of pluck and work, had been the victim of so many insect bites and stings that for a while she was not able to carry on. I have noticed the same thing occur all over the Central American archæological field ; sickness always, and sometimes death, constantly seem to haunt the archæologist. It may be that this is due entirely to the unhealthy environment—the plagues of insects, poor food, bad water, malaria, steaming climate, the depressing effect of the dark, dank, gloomy bush, unrelieved by sunlight and air. When these ruins were inhabited the population must have been a very large one ; what is now an unbroken stretch of sunless, airless, almost uninhabited bush was then a smiling, open country, covered with maize, intensively cultivated, the scene of a

busy agricultural civilisation, open to the sun and breezes from the sea, and free from malaria and the innumerable insect pests which now make life a misery to the archæologist or explorer travelling through it. In fact, what was during the old Maya Empire a pleasant and salubrious country is now just the reverse.

On Good Friday there was celebrated at the little Indian village of Aguacate, about fifteen miles from here over bush trails, what is known as the Cortez dance or play. The village normally has a population of about 150 people, but on this day it reminded one of Chichester during Goodwood week, for every Indian who could possibly make the grade had come in from settlements within a radius of twenty-five miles, and even a few from the nearest villages in the adjacent Republic of Guatemala. Quite a number of men and women were on the trail in various stages of intoxication, mostly lying peacefully in the bush by the side of the path, sleeping off the effects of their debauch. One man, who was carrying a heavy load in the *macapaal* slung over his back, had fallen right across the trail, and lay where the effects of the liquor had overtaken him. In his right hand he held a bottle still a quarter-full of strong rum, and the broad strap of his *macapaal* had slipped over his nose and mouth, been drawn taut by the heavy load, and almost stopped his respiration. He was breathing stertorously, and his face was an ugly mottled purple; indeed, I believe that, had Muddy not shifted the strap, he must soon have died of suffocation, yet half a dozen other Indians had passed, and so used are they to these scenes that they had simply continued on their way without attempting to relieve him. After witnessing so much drunkenness on the road, it was an agreeable surprise to find that the Aguacate Indians, who were giving the dance, were all perfectly sober,

notwithstanding the fact that they had laid in a supply of over a hundred bottles of rum for the refreshment of the village. This, however, was not to be used till the ceremony was over, and I think it showed wonderful self-control on their part that they were able to abstain from the liquor till the end of the week, enjoying only the pleasure of anticipation, by taking an occasional look at the precious demijohns.

The origin of this play is unknown, but, according to the Indians, it was first introduced to their village by their ancestors from Cahabon, in Guatemala, many generations ago. It is said to represent the Conquest of Mexico by Hernando Cortez, and the subsequent baptism of the Indians, but I am not at all certain that it does not represent the coming of Cortez to this remote neighbourhood during his journey from Mexico city to Omoa, accompanied by a great army of Aztec chiefs, allies, and Spanish conquistadores—probably the most astonishing feat of endurance the world has ever known. If the play actually represents the first coming of the Spaniards to Mexico, it may have been taught to the Kekchi Indians by the Aztec allies of Cortez, who accompanied him on his march south, of whom many thousands died of hardships on the way, and many more never returned to Mexico, preferring rather to remain in the new country and settle down than to undergo the hazards and hardships of the return march. Cortez must have passed within a very few miles of Lubaantun, which was at that time, doubtless, already a mass of ruins, and, if inhabited at all, containing only a few scattered, degenerate villages.

The *dramatis personæ*, thirty-four in number, are as follows: Montezuma and three of his vassal kings—these all wear crowns, and with the exception of Montezuma, who

is clothed entirely in red, are dressed in gaily coloured garments, with many streamers and silk bows, having attached to their backs light frameworks, from which project in all directions the gorgeous tail feathers of the macaw ; four wild Indians, with large feathered head-dresses, and light feather-covered frameworks on their backs ; two *tarase*, or executioners, wearing striped garments, with elaborate feather head-dresses, each carrying an axe ; a *cosol*, dressed in black, with coloured stripes, and a cap with a curved, horn-like projection, to the end of which is attached a bunch of ribbons and feathers ; he carries a hatchet and long knife, and is an attendant of Montezuma ; one priest, in robes somewhat resembling those of a Roman Catholic priest, and carrying a large book and writing materials ; one godfather (who is next in rank to Cortez amongst the Spaniards, and stands as godfather to all the heathen Indians who are baptised) dressed in black, carries a short sword, and wears a cloth arrangement on his head to represent a helmet, from which project three long feathers ; twelve soldiers dressed in black, with helmets decorated with short plumes of feathers ; three tigers, wearing tiger-masks, and five girls in the costumes which they still wear, and probably wore 1,000 years ago, decorated with bright ribbons, and all the jewellery they could borrow from their friends and find room to attach to any part of their persons or clothes. These characters are divided into two factions—Cortez, the soldiers, the priest, the two *tarase*, and the godfather on one side, opposed to Montezuma, the three kings, the four wild Indians, the tigers, girls, and *cosol* on the other. All wear painted masks of light wood, with holes over the eyebrows to see through. The eyes are fashioned from coloured stones or wood, and the teeth of shell. All flourish small rattles made of dried calabashes

holding a few pebbles, and one of the kings, named Tacal, carries a small looking-glass, from which he reflects sun-rays into the eyes of the actors from time to time. The performance commences with a couple of the wild Indians dancing with two of the girls. The *tarase* try to take away the girls, but the tigers and *cosol* prevent them, and a *tarase* is caught and eaten by one of the tigers. A cup of water is next placed on the ground, over which the tigers leap nimbly many times. One of the kings then takes up this cup and offers it to one of the girls to drink ; she takes it in her hand and dashes the contents in his face, a piece of slap-stick comedy which always brings down the house, but does not seem to fit in anywhere in the plot. The second *tarase* now tries to abduct one of the girls, but is caught in the act by one of the tigers. They fight, and the *tarase* kills the tiger with his sword, and carries him away on his back. Cortez now takes the centre of the stage, accompanied by the soldiers, the priest, the godfather, and the girls. The girls all kneel down in front of the priest and are blessed by him. Next the kings are each arrested in turn by two soldiers, and lugged up to the priest to be baptised. When Montezuma is arrested for the same purpose, the girls, kings, and Indians all raise a loud wailing ; he is nevertheless baptised. One of the *tarase* now endeavours to arrest the *cosol* and bring him up for baptism also, but the *cosol* resists, and they commence to fight. During this fight a dialogue takes place between the combatants, the only occasion on which there is any interchange of speech, the play being otherwise entirely in dumb show. The *cosol* reviles the Spaniards, and says they have come to rob the Indians of their land and their liberty ; that he cannot be baptised, as he is the spirit of the cloud—the god of rain ?—who has come to protect the Indians, but, now

the Spaniards have arrived, will return to his own place. The fight proceeds vigorously. The *tarase*, insulting the *cosol*, tells him he is a cat-faced liar, and he will prove that he is no spirit by killing him, when he will certainly go back to his own place. The fight and dialogue go on interminably, till at last the *cosol* is killed, and his body carried out to an accompaniment of lamentations by the Indians and girls. With the death of the *cosol* the drama, if such it can be called, comes to an end.

I could hardly recommend it for performance at a London theatre, as it lasts six solid hours, during the whole of which time all the performers dance and prance about in the broiling sun, with unflagging energy for, while one set of performers take the centre of the stage—or, rather, the earth floor of the *plaza*—the rest dance grotesquely around them, shaking their calabash rattles to keep in time to the music of a native orchestra composed of a harp, drum, flutes, and guitar-like instruments made of large calabashes. The music is quite attractive, but rather weird, parts of it like a quick march with plenty of action, and parts not unlike jazz, while at times it resembles no kind of civilised music. It is entirely of native composition.

Seekers after something new and grotesque in the musical line would probably find a visit to these remote and mysterious Indians well worth their trouble. The on-lookers, who number several hundred, form a circle round the performers, and the closeness of the crowd, added to the terrific heat of the midday sun beating down on the airless *plaza*, are almost insupportable, but no one seems to notice this, and men, women, and children stick it out to the bitter end, apparently entranced with the whole performance and convulsed with merriment over the silliest piece of comedy, such as one of the soldiers being tripped up by an

Indian, or a Spaniard, who is making too free with one of the Indian maidens receiving a dab of the tiger's paw from behind when he is trying to kiss her.

Small calabashes of corn lob, a glutinous, milky fluid made from boiled maize thickened with black beans, are passed round during the performance to the onlookers by the girls of the village, and eagerly drunk, as this is about the only refreshment they can get while the show lasts. Muddy took a bowl, thinking the beans were native cacao, but was soon disillusioned, for the stuff is about as palatable as castor oil. He asked the girl why they did not substitute cacao for beans.

"Oh, señor," she replied, "that would not do at all, as the drink would be so nice the visitors would drink up every bean of cacao and every grain of corn in the village, and we should have none left for ourselves." A sensible young woman, and truthful!

The funeral took place in the village of a man who had died the previous night. As it differed somewhat from the other funeral we had seen, I will describe it briefly. The corpse was laid out, on a platform of sticks; it rested on a great slab of the bark of the moho-tree, and was partly covered by a sheet. The deceased was dressed in his ordinary working clothes, with his machete in its scabbard strapped round his waist, and his moccasins and hat on. By his side, as provision for the long journey he was about to take, were placed his best suit of clothes, a spare pair of moccasins, a calabash, a quantity of cacao, some gum copal incense, and eight candles made of the black wax of the native bee. Usually the dead are buried simply wrapped in moho bark, but this man was confined in his dug-out, which, cut in two, redundant parts chopped off, and one half tilted over the other, made a very snug

container. He was carried to the cemetery on a stretcher of sticks borne by four of his friends, the procession being led by a man playing lively tunes on a flute, next to whom marched the oldest woman in the village (who had not yet reached sixty), vigorously swinging one of their clay censers, and fumigating both the corpse and the followers. Everyone seemed quite cheerful and happy, and not in the least depressed by the ceremony; even the dead man's two little girls of ten and twelve were laughing and joking, as if the loss of a father were an everyday occurrence, and not to be taken seriously. The only one who really looked sad and shed a few tears over the dead man's grave was his mother. But, after all, why should they grieve? Existence, from the cradle to the grave, is one long struggle with a far from bountiful nature, in order to keep soul and body together. From the time they are four or five years old they have to help their fathers in the *milpa*, or, if girls, their mothers in the house. Poor and insufficient food, without change or variety, to eat, inadequate clothes to meet the damp cold of winter nights, a clay-floored hut to live in, no light but the dim one of a native black candle to see by once the sun has gone down—an almost constant state of physical discomfort from rheumatism, due to exposure without proper clothes in all weathers, hookworm, anæmia, enlarged spleen, and malaria—no diversion beyond an occasional debauch on native rum, perhaps two or three times a year, which is all most of them can afford, and which usually has such a come-back on their poor, debilitated bodies that the game is hardly worth the candle—is it any wonder that death, when it comes, is looked upon by them without terror, and without regret? It at least means a release from the hard work, disease, and discomfort of this life, and, whether their faith tends more towards Christianity or

their old faith, in any event a fair prospect of a happier existence in the next world.

The cemetery—if such it can be termed—is the crudest I have ever seen. There is no pretence of making a clearing in the virgin bush, but when anyone dies a *picado*, or narrow path, is cut into the forest in the general direction of where others are buried. At the end of this, a hole four or five feet deep is dug in which the corpse is deposited. The only ceremony or ritual performed consists in the fumigation of the grave with incense before the corpse is put in, and the scattering on its bottom of the incense remaining in the censor. The frame of sticks upon which the corpse was carried is cut into small pieces, which are also put on the bottom of the grave. Everyone throws a few handfuls of earth over the corpse; two black wax candles are lit at the foot, and two at the head of the grave; whereupon the ceremony is over, and the eternal bush in a few months has closed in and completely obliterated the site.

I have never seen a single old man or woman in the village; indeed, I doubt whether there is one who has reached sixty years—though none of them has the least idea of his own age—which is perhaps hardly to be wondered at when one contemplates their environment and the disabilities from which they suffer.

CHAPTER XIII

Hiring under the Labour Law of British Honduras—Ruins on the western side of the citadel—My cook not recovered from *Semana Santa*—Lady marooned on the rocks—Indian women's face-powder—Women's toilet accessories amongst the ancient Maya—Why modern Maya women gave up their old face-powder—Tosh's snake—A new use for painted stucco—Slender resources of Maya—An unenthusiastic bridegroom—Flora's *milpa*—Contents of late burial mound—Ancient pottery fragment in modern grave—Burial mounds of the last period—Opening a stone-faced pyramid—Cutos—Parallel between Lubaantun pyramid and St. Paul's Cathedral—Scamped work of the ancient builders—Problem presented by cutos and skull—Ceremonial cannibalism—Large snake's eggs—Terrific heat at the ruins—A too medicinal drinking water.

AFTER four days of enforced idleness I was glad to be awakened, soon after 6 a.m., on Easter Monday by the joyful sound of the conch shell summoning the men to their work. Sixteen men, including the blind boy, turned up, and, as five more had signed on to commence work for a month from to-morrow, we anticipated having at least twenty labourers, all fairly good men. This signing under the Labour Law of the colony is an excellent method of getting men to work, and, what is more important, to keep on working for a stated period once they have started. We gave each hired man a sum of, say, ten dollars, as an advance (and just before Holy Week, when everyone wants money for the celebrations, ten dollars in a lump sum looked about the most desirable thing on earth to a penniless man). For this he contracted to come and work for us for one month, but if, without reasonable excuse, such as sickness or accident, he failed to turn up, or, having turned up, to fulfil his contract, then he had committed an offence under

the Labour Law, and could be brought up before the nearest Commissioner, either fined or imprisoned, and compelled to return to his work. Needless to say we did not contemplate any such drastic measures as these, for it is a far cry to the nearest Commissioner's court, and we depended more on the moral suasion exercised by the *Alcalde*, who has no jurisdiction under the Labour Law; but the men were not aware of this fact, while they did know that we had the power to bring them up.

Mitchell Hedges and I crossed over to the ruins on the west of the West Creek. The highest peak there is fully 300 feet above the creek level, and the buildings are of precisely the same character as those upon which we are working on this side; they are, in fact, a continuation of our ruins from the amphitheatre westward, from which they are separated by the creek and its steep banks. On the west of these second ruins is another creek, and, to the west of this again, the same type of ruins on still higher ground, overlooking the entire surrounding country. The whole of this great area is covered with dense virgin bush, many of the trees rising to a height of 250 feet or more, so we realised that to clear the whole area would be quite impossible with the time and labour at our disposal. We cleared the tongue of land upon which our own ruin stands, between the two creeks, and cut *picados*, or narrow trails, throughout the other ruins, with a view to obtaining at least some idea of their character and extent.

My cook had not yet recovered from the effects of *Semana Santa*, or Holy Week, and was in a somewhat exalted mental condition, from which she descended only at intervals to look after her cooking. Unfortunately for me, in one of the periods of exaltation she put about half a pound of margarine in the chicken *tomale*, instead of a tablespoonful,

the result being that it turned out from the wild-plantain leaf, in which it is cooked, a greasy, sloshy, semi-liquid mess, with masses of chicken, like derelicts, just awash in it. The wife of one of our neighbours, however, was in still worse case. She and her husband visited the Saturday *fiesta*, and returned in a small dug-out in the early hours of the morning. Both were in a semi-comatose condition, but the husband was so used to river travel that the act of paddling home was performed automatically. Arriving at his own landing, he quite forgot his wife, who had gone asleep, curled up in the stern of the dug-out ; he even forgot to make fast the dorey, and just managed to stagger home and fall into his hammock ; but it was not long before the sleeping village was awakened by a weird and dismal howling from down the river, and on the most valiant spirits screwing up their courage to brave *pishan*, *shtabai*, and other forms of ghosts, and proceeding down stream to investigate, they found the dorey caught in some rocks just above the rapids, the lady, now thoroughly sober from fright, standing in the stern emitting an S.O.S call alternately to the villagers, her husband, and her favourite saints.

From time immemorial the Indian women have used a white powder for their face, but more particularly for the upper part of their bodies to the waist, which is left uncovered. This was manufactured originally, I believe, from powdered gypsum, which in some of the old graves I have found in the saucers in which it was ground up, together with the flat spatula of flint used for grinding it, and accompanied by other toilet accessories, such as red ochre for rouge, black and green powders for painting the face, a looking-glass of polished iron pyrites, and tweezers of copper for depilatory purposes. Later, and up to quite a recent

date, the powder was prepared by crushing up egg-shells. The procedure was quite a complicated one, and always carried out by the old women of the village. The shell was first boiled, roasted, then powdered fine, water was added to the powder, and it was carefully strained ; finally it was allowed to dry into little cakes which, when required for use, were crushed in the fingers, and applied either with the palm of the hand or a powder-puff of raw cotton. Recently I saw for the first time in my experience a tin of imported toilet-powder in an Indian hut, where there were several daughters. I asked them if they had given up the old *polvillo* used by their mothers and grandmothers, and the oldest, quite a pretty girl of eighteen or twenty, who had just been applying powder liberally over her brown face, arms, and breasts, and consequently looked like a badly whitewashed adobe wall, said, " Yes, we have." I asked, " Why ? "

" Well, señor," she replied, " I like the old powder best, because it keeps your skin dry longer and lasts better, but I use the new powder from the point [i.e. Punta Gorda] partly because it is cheaper to buy than to make the old kind, but mainly because the men like the nice smell that the new powder gives you when you use plenty of it."

After this, I should not be surprised to see a beehive hat and bingle in the village some day, while the rest of the Indian girl's costume, consisting of a loin-cloth to the knees, would not require much alteration to bring it into harmony with the latest modes.

One night Tosh, the little Kekchi boy who sleeps in the kitchen in a hammock by the side of Muddy, awoke us both, screaming in a paroxysm of fear. When questioned, he said he had seen in the moonlight a large snake crawling from under his hammock up the centre pole of the hut ;

but we laughed at him, thinking he had had a nightmare, as snakes are the rarest things about the ruins, and for one to invade not only our bare bush-free terrace, but the house itself, seemed incredible. Next morning, however, the cook, who is a strong-minded, strong-armed female, came hurtling out of the little cubby-hole adjoining the kitchen—where she keeps food, as it is on the edge of the *barranco*, and cool and breezy—literally shrieking; she had almost stepped on a huge snake coiled on the floor. From her description it was evidently a large woula, the local constrictor, about twelve feet long, which had probably been attracted by the chickens; luckily these were in their pen, made of closely set snake-proof sticks, so he was disappointed. He managed to get out of the house, through a gap between the sticks of the wall, before Muddy or I could get at him with machetes, and escaped into the bush on the side of the *barranco*, but both Muddy and Tosh were extremely nervous about sleeping in their shack that night, and took several reefs in their hammock ropes in order to be well out of snake-reach of the ground.

The men are in many ways extraordinarily stupid; they have been warned over and over again to bring in anything that they find in the mounds, beyond earth and stones, and yet, this evening when they came in, Muddy happened to see one of them carrying some object carefully in his hand, which on examination proved to be a piece of smooth stucco, measuring about 4in. by 3in. One surface had apparently been adherent to a wall, while the other had been covered by two coats of paint, the inner bright red, the outer almost black. The man said he did not know we wanted this sort of thing, but had found plenty of small pieces amongst the stones, which he had thrown away. The piece in his hand he was carrying home to grind up into a powder,

mix with water, and use as a medicine, as it was reputed an excellent remedy for almost every kind of sickness—exactly the same superstition, in fact, as I found at Corozal, where, during the night, the whole side of a painted stucco wall, upon which was inscribed a Maya date, and which I had exposed within a large mound that day, was torn down, broken into pieces, and carried away by old women to grind into powder and sell as medicine, thus not only robbing me of my priceless painted stucco, but practising medicine without a licence, and so depriving me of my patients, who at the best of times had but slight confidence in European medical procedure.

One of our Indian labourers, who had taken an advance of ten dollars for the purpose of going to Punta Gorda to get married, returned on Wednesday. He, his father, and prospective bride—a little Indian girl about sixteen, rather pretty and dainty, and possessed of a wide, perennial smile—had tramped the twenty-seven miles in to Punta Gorda on the Monday, and slept there in a shed. Of the ten dollars capital upon which they had married, five went in fees for performing the ceremony, and the other five seemed such an insignificant sum for all they required, and to start housekeeping on, that they spent it in food and rum—mostly the latter—before starting on their return journey. The wedding-night was spent in the open bush, where luckily it was dry. Next day they reached San Pedro, after two days' honeymoon, mostly spent on foot, and he resumed his work. They had, of course, no hut, so went to live with his father, where already his parents, sisters and brothers, and brother-in-law and his wife, lived in the one-roomed shack; the little bride, however, did not seem to mind this in the least, as privacy is a thing she had never been accustomed to and did not appreciate. I asked the bridegroom what he

would have done had we not been here to advance the ten dollars which made the marriage ceremony possible. "Well, señor," he said, "we would just have lived together without any marriage, and better so, perhaps, because then I would not owe you ten dollars, and have lost three days' wages by going into Punta Gorda."

I may say that only a few weeks later the poor young fellow caught the epidemic prevalent in the village and died, leaving his little bride disconsolate and entirely unprovided for, as so frequently happens when the mortality amongst the men is entirely out of proportion to that amongst the women.

Excavation was commenced on a small mound in what is known as "Flora's *milpa*," so called because an Indian widow woman of that name made a corn plantation there, all on her own, some four or five years ago. The mound was almost circular, 25ft. in diameter and 4ft. high. It was found to be built of earth, amongst which were a few large stones and a little rubble. At a depth of just under two feet, near the centre, were found a number of human bones, consisting of fragments of arm and leg bones, vertebræ, and part of the lower jaw. These bones were in an excellent state of preservation, though buried directly in contact with the earth, and in my opinion could not have been interred for more than a century. No fragments of the skull were found, and the bones were disposed irregularly, almost as if this had been a secondary burial. With the corpse were buried a couple of small conch shells, probably used as ornaments, a number of cuto shells, large river snails (probably forming part of a food-offering), fragments of a small, round, red earthenware pot, which had probably contained cacao or corn, a tiny, crude, three-legged pot, holding less than one ounce, several pieces of powdery white

stone, used by the Indians in spinning, to keep the thread from sticking to their thumb and forefinger, one-half of a well-chipped flint spear-head, and a small triangular fragment of what had been a very beautifully carved, light, yellowish-red earthenware vase. Unfortunately, this fragment had been very much defaced by weathering before it was buried, but such of the design as was left was sufficient to indicate the high technique with which it had been fashioned, partly by moulding, partly by carving in low relief. The burial on top of the mound probably belongs to the very last Maya occupation, immediately preceding, and continuous with, that of the present inhabitants. The same type of objects are buried with the dead in both—food-offerings, weapons, and ornaments. The art of manufacturing the little clay plaques, figurines, and whistles had been lost, or perhaps deliberately abandoned as the ceremonial of their ancient religion began to give way, little by little, to the new religion introduced by the conquerors, but their old stone weapons and implements had not as yet given place entirely to the steel knife and machete of the modern Maya. The fragment of sculptured pottery undoubtedly belonged to a much older period, and was probably included accidentally in the earth taken from the surface to build the mound.

On digging farther into this mound, three feet below the surface, and a little to the south of the first burial, two large flat stone flags were brought to light, each measuring $3\frac{1}{2}$ ft. by $2\frac{1}{2}$ ft. They were placed with their long edges together, and, on being lifted, were found to form the roof of a small burial cyst, 5 ft. long by 2 ft. broad, the sides of which were constructed by upright flat stones supporting the roof-flags. Within this chamber were found a few very much eroded fragments of human long bones, a large, round, red pot, where the head had rested, three small conch shells, a gorget

cut from a larger conch shell, portions of a very delicate little circular mirror of iron pyrites, and a small saucer-like vessel. On top of the roof was found a clay figurine representing a woman, holding in the left hand what appears to be a dish containing fruit or some globular objects, and affixed to her left forearm a human head. Unfortunately, both the head and legs of this figurine were broken away. The deeper burial in this mound is obviously of much earlier date than the more superficial one, and, notwithstanding the fact that the bones were in a much more advanced state of decay than those found in Mounds A and B, I am inclined, judging by the nature of the objects found with both, to assign them to approximately the same period. The curious thing is that, whereas in Mounds A and B the structures made by an older people had been used for burial by those succeeding them, in Flora's *milpa*, one of the original burial mounds of these filchers had itself been filched by a still later people—poetic, if post-mortem, justice, in fact, on the graves of the original thieves. A second mound was opened in Flora's *milpa*—a heap of earth and stones two feet high. In it were found portions of a skeleton in an extended position, the bones, which were in direct contact with the earth, being a good deal eroded. With them were found one common round pot, at the head, several cuto shells at the feet, and nothing more. This mound evidently belonged to the same period as the superficial burial in the mound previously described.

We started clearing a small pyramidal structure to the east of the amphitheatre (55 on the plan). It measured 54ft. by 30ft. at the base and was 12ft. high. Its flat summit measured 40ft. by 15ft. The outer wall was built of nicely cut and very closely fitted blocks of limestone, beneath which was a layer of rubble varying from 6in. to

2ft. in thickness, and under this again the original pyramid around which the outer skin had been built up later. The walls of this inner pyramid were constructed of well-cut oblong blocks of limestone, larger than those of the outer skin, built round a solid, almost monolithic, core of immense rocks, some of which weighed up to five or six hundred pounds. Within this central pyramid were found innumerable pieces of smooth, painted stucco, which had evidently at one time covered a wall, some still adherent to the squared stones of which the pyramid was built. It had been covered by two coats of paint, an inner bright red, an outer purplish black. The whole structure rested on the shale rock. On its west side, just beneath the immense blocks which formed the foundation, were found some human skull bones in a fair state of preservation, with over a thousand cutos, a whelk-like shell-fish which forms a favourite food of the Indians. At one time this mollusc was evidently a denizen of the Columbia branch of the Rio Grande, as the numerous shells found in the river-bed attest, but it exists there no longer.

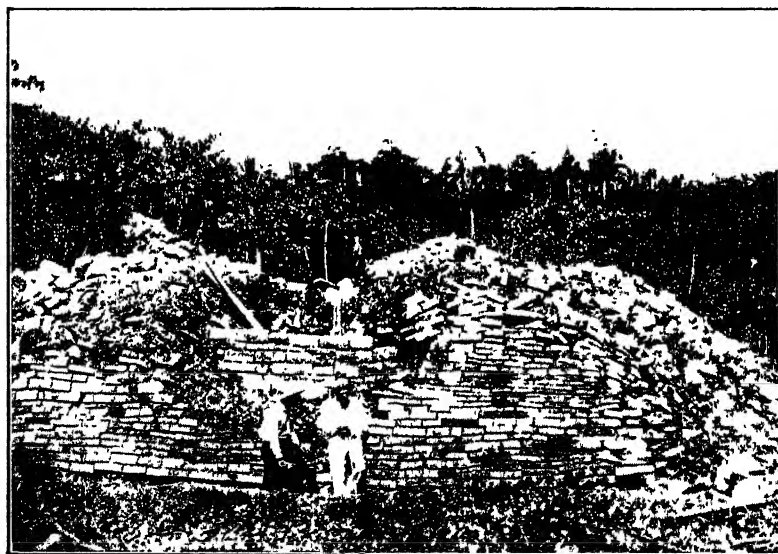
This remarkable little pyramid throws considerable light on several points regarding the architectural methods of the builders of the ruins, and it also presents an interesting problem. It was obvious that the inner pyramid had been constructed from material which had at one time formed part of a temple or residence, the walls of which had been covered with painted stucco, and yet not a single chamber, either plain or stucco-covered, was found by us at any part of the ruins, the inference being that the whole of the original buildings must have been torn down by the builders of the first pyramids. The inner pyramid was almost monolithic in structure, and alone would have withstood the assaults even of tropical rains and vegetation for an indefinite period ;

indeed, it is the same now as when first erected, as no interstices were presented for the entrance of roots, and no earth for their nourishment. The builders of the outer skin, by placing a thick layer of rubble and earth beneath it, were simply courting disaster for their work, as not only must the roots have found a ready entry between the cracks in the outer skin of small squared blocks, unmortared as they were, but ample sustenance in the loose layer of rubble and earth beneath. The outer layer, though probably by far the more recent, is already in a fair way towards disintegration, while the inner structure is unaltered. In fact, very much the same thing has happened to the work of the second occupiers of Lubaantun as has occurred in the case of St. Paul's Cathedral. Either from carelessness, lack of sufficient labour, or indifference as to the lasting quality of their buildings, these later builders scamped their work, using easily obtained but unsuitable material, thus sacrificing permanence and solidity to size and imposing appearance.

The problem presented by the human skull bones and immense mass of cutos, beneath the foundation, is an interesting one. Was it, as in the case of Mounds A and B, the burial of an individual of a comparatively recent people, made in one of the original structures of the builders of the city ; or was it, perhaps, a dedicatory offering, placed beneath the base of the pyramid when its foundation was laid, the skull only being buried, and the rest of the body distributed amongst the people, to be devoured by them in that curious ceremonial cannibalism prevalent at one time amongst the Maya tribes? I am inclined to favour the latter hypothesis, as the skull was not accompanied by any fragments of the long bones, which usually outlast it, as would have been the case in an ordinary burial. Such of the skull bones as were recovered were in an excellent state



ARENA WITH PYRAMIDS IN BACKGROUND



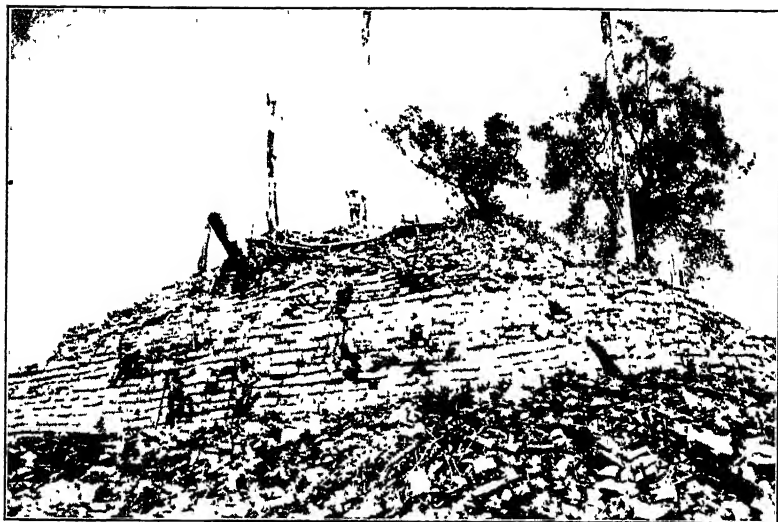
STONE-FACED PYRAMID SHOWING CORE AND OUTER SKIN

of preservation, which would tend to show that they were comparatively recent, but it must be remembered that, buried beneath the great foundation stones, they were in a place where neither moisture nor vegetation could affect them, and so would suffer comparatively little from the passage of time. The immense mass of cuto shells was an extraordinary find, such as I have never before encountered at a Maya ruin of any period. As I have already said, it was customary among the Maya to bury with each individual their weapons, implements, or ornaments, as an indication of their calling. If this custom was carried out in the present case, one can only conclude that the deceased must have been a purveyor of shell-fish, as beyond cutos, no other objects whatever were found. If, on the other hand, they formed part of a dedicatory offering at the foundation of the temple, the offerers must have been exceedingly canny-minded individuals, for the fish of every one of the cutos had been removed before burial, as is evidenced by the fact that all the apices of the shells had been broken off, to admit of their being easily extracted, unless indeed this was done to facilitate their extraction by the departed during his long journey to the Maya heaven.

The temperature in the shade of my bush hut, with the windows open for whatever little air there was to blow through, was 95 degrees, and in the shade of the *uameil*, or secondary growth of *milpa*, where a good deal of our digging amongst the small mounds had to be done, it was 102 degrees. The perspiration simply poured off the Indians at the bottom of the great holes in the mounds, lined with blocks of limestone, which radiated heat like a furnace, and at least every hour they had to visit the water canteen, though this does not provide a very pleasant drink, for the water is lukewarm, and so impregnated with lime as to

be quite bitter ; however, it is the water they are used to, and seems to agree with them, though I was obliged to rig up an arrangement consisting of large sheets of moho bark draining into calabashes, to catch a little rain water, for the river water, even when boiled, and so freed from its temporary hardness, produces disastrous results on my unacclimatised mucous membrane.

I had only seen two snakes during our entire stay at Lubaantun, and concluded that they must be quite rare, but one morning, on the men returning to work at Mound No. 55, on the last of the amphitheatre, they discovered, between the outer and inner skins of the mound, eight enormous, white, tough, snake-eggs, all stuck together, each nearly three inches long, which had not been there the previous night when they left work. The snake which laid these must have been a monster ; a pretty sure indication fortunately that it was not one of the poisonous varieties, as they do not grow to any great size, but probably a woula, which reaches a length sometimes of twenty feet, and is quite harmless, except that, if cornered, it can give an exceedingly nasty bite.



ONE OF THE GREAT PYRAMIDS



PART OF N GRAND STAND OF AMPHITHEATRE

CHAPTER XIV

Purchase of "Devil Dance" masks and costumes—Believed to be haunted—Origin of "Devil Dance"—The performers, and dress—Mother's petition to join her dead son soon granted—Amateur curio-hunters—Excavations found in the ruins are of considerable age—By whom made, and for what purpose—"Killing" objects buried with the dead very annoying to modern archæologists—Pickets placed by men to give warning of visits to detect loafing—A weird pool—Curious pebbles—Petrifaction while alive—Lady Brown fires the bush—A terrific conflagration, covering 20 acres—Indians impervious to heat and smoke, which nearly choke us—A wonderful pyrotechnic display—Destruction of insects and small animals in the fire—The former back as thick as ever in a couple of days—Remarkable echoes at the ruins—Objects found in clearing the amphitheatre.

I WAS able to purchase from a boy near Aguacate the entire outfit for the Maya "Devil Dance," consisting of masks, costumes, and musical instruments, all made locally from ancient models handed down from father to son for generations. The outfit belonged to the boy's father (a celebrated maestro in the art of devil dancing), who died about two years ago. For six years previous to his death he had not dared to have one of the performances, as the Indians are becoming rapidly more Christianised, and it need hardly be said that the padres who come in contact with them, strongly discourage the performance of rites and ceremonies which tend to perpetuate their ancient religion. The owner was only too pleased to dispose of these appurtenances of idolatry, for a pecuniary consideration, for not only were they of no use to the family, who could never expect to give another performance with them, but they were dangerous objects to be found in the possession of an Indian who wished

to be on good terms with the Church. They were kept carefully wrapped up by themselves in a little hut, where they had lain undisturbed since the death of the former owner, and there seemed to have grown up around them a certain feeling of mystery and dread, and a belief that each mask was haunted by the actual presence of the devil it represented, only requiring the right combination of time and place for his materialisation. When they were unwrapped and handed over, three black wax candles were kept alight all the time, and each mask was fumigated with incense from an *incensario*. Moreover, a couple of candles were given in as *lagniap* to burn when the devils were being installed in their new home, to keep off evil influences. The legend of the dance as explained to me by an old Kekchi is as follows.

Many, many years ago, the world was very different from what it is now. Everyone was happy and contented, joyful and glad, and nobody thought evil thoughts or committed evil acts; evil in fact was non-existent in the world of those far-off days, while goodness and happiness reigned supreme, and death was unknown. But the king of the devils, who lived with his court in Metnal—the Maya Hell—highly disapproved of this state of affairs, and determined to conquer the world and its inhabitants, and make them his slaves. To carry out this plan successfully, he thought the easiest and simplest means would be to introduce evil amongst the children of men. For this purpose he collected an army, consisting of his wife, his father, and mother, four minor devils, a boar, five sows, a monkey, and death. The women were to introduce dissensions and lust, the swine greed and selfishness, the monkey mischief, and death fear amongst men. (At this point I reminded the old man that there were not supposed to be any women in the Maya



KEKCHI INDIANS DRESSED FOR CORTEZ DANCE (*see page 169*)



KEKCHI INDIANS DRESSED FOR DEVIL DANCE

hell, but he only grinned and said, "*Ah Tat, ma xupal ma metnal*"; literally, "if there were no women there would be no hell.")

The party, headed by the king of the devils, set out on their travels, visiting every village and town on earth, dancing to music, singing lewd songs, drinking, and introducing everywhere amongst men, lust, drunkenness, hatred, greed, dishonesty, and death, till the whole world was corrupted and became as we know it to-day. But so cunning was the devil, that in case men should revert again to the age of goodness and innocence, and all his work be undone, he compelled them and their descendants to prefer strife to peace, lust to purity, evil to good, and actually to hold the devil dance as a constant reminder of their enslavement to evil, of which it became a sort of perverted sacrament. The characters in the play consist of the king of the devils and his wife, father and mother, four minor devils, a boar, five sows, a monkey, and a man dressed in a white cotton garment, with a skeleton painted on it, to represent death. All wore large, grotesque, wooden masks, rather well carved from very light wood, painted red, black, and yellow, with three horns instead of the conventional two projecting from the forehead, large tusks, and snakes with green heads and red bodies, crawling over their faces and around the horns. The chief of the devils has, in addition, a small dove-like bird perched on top of all three of his horns. All the devils have long black moustaches, obviously inspired by the *conquistadores* of post-Columbian days, who must have appeared to the Indians about the nearest approach to their conception of devils with which they were ever likely to come in contact, exhibiting to the fullest extent the greed, lust, cruelty, and deceit of their prototypes. This party of fifteen used to go round to all

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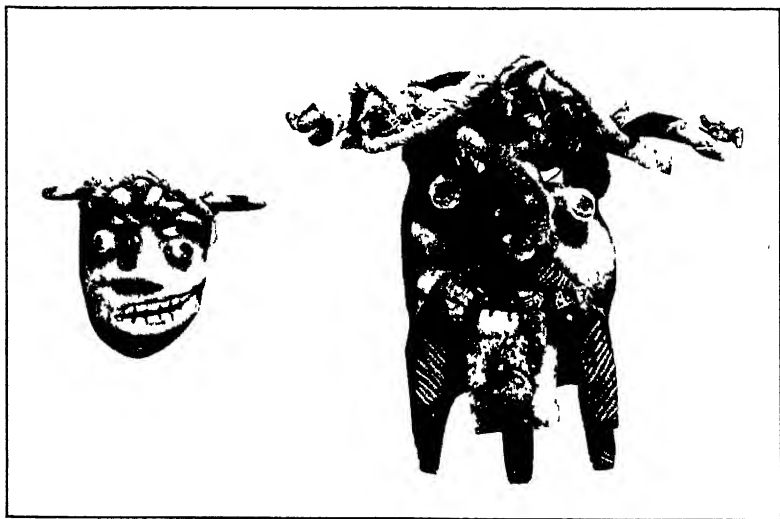
the houses, sometimes of one village, sometimes of another, once a year, at specified seasons. The chief devil and his wife each played a huge mandolin-like instrument, made from gourds, the other devils scraped on long calabashes, the sides of which were serrated, and the monkey shook a rattle. To this music they chanted monotonously a number of songs which will not admit of repetition, and danced a somewhat lewd and grotesque dance. The first song sung by the king commences, "I am the king of the devils, and I come in victory and in glory," and the last song, before leaving each house, ends, "The devils are off, but not to hell."

At a dance held in celebration of a wedding while we were at Lubaantun, a man whose wife had died only two days before was dancing and drinking freely. I asked him how he could reconcile this with his sorrow. "*Pues Senor,*" he said, "*soy alegre, porque tengo mucho sentimiento*"; literally, "I am joyful because I feel so much grief"; though what I think he meant was, "I am drunk because I feel so sorrowful." The woman who died had been perfectly well a week previously, when she attended the funeral of her son, which I have already described. She was the only one to show the least sorrow at the ceremony, where, kneeling down beside the grave, she prayed for the rest of his soul, and that she might join him soon. Her prayer was not long in receiving an answer, for though she appeared to be a perfectly healthy robust woman, in less than a week she lay by his side in her own little hole in the bush.

We noticed that many of the structures have had large excavations made into them at some period in the past, notably the summit of the mound ascended by the southern stairway, the mound upon which the immense tree had been uprooted, the burial vault under the small mound in



MASKS OF DEVIL AND WIFE



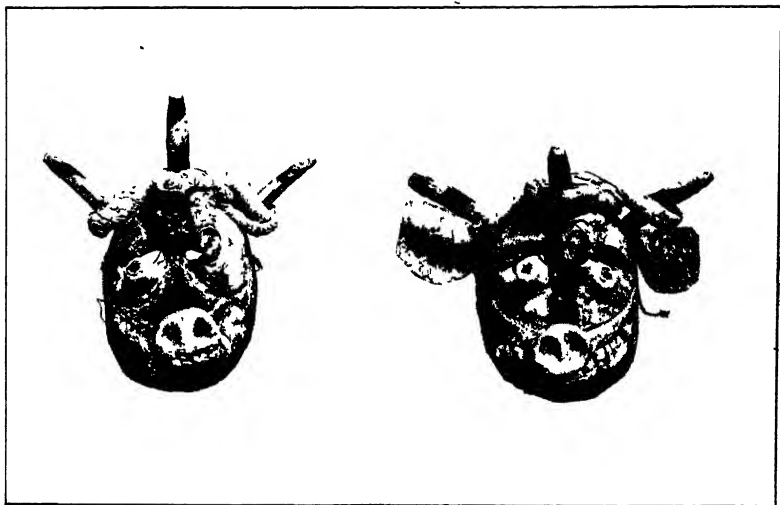
MASKS OF DEVIL'S FATHER AND AIDE

the northern *plaza*, a large terraced mound to the west of the ruins across the creek, and others. At first we thought that these excavations had been made by treasure and curiosity-seekers in recent times, who are, even in the remotest regions of the Central American bush, the bane of the archæologist's existence, and, next to those who deface the ruins by scratching their names and sentiments upon the wall, probably the most objectionable pests from whom he suffers. But on consideration, we concluded that this could not very well have been the case, as the region has till quite recently been practically unexplored, and everyone who has visited it, with the business which brought them there, is well known. In many of the holes which have been dug, several inches of vegetal humus had accumulated, and lichens had grown on the stones, so that there was little to distinguish them from the rest of the ruins, except the fact that large holes existed where no holes should have been. On the summit of Mound 27 two excavations had been made, one at its northern, the other at its southern, extremity. At the bottom of the southern excavation at least two inches of vegetal humus had collected, indicating considerable age, but exactly how great it was impossible to judge, as amidst this luxuriant vegetation, vegetal humus, even at the summit of a high stone-faced pyramid, accumulates at an incredible rate; but in the centre of the excavation at the southern end of the mound, stood the rotting stump of a cedar tree about 3ft. in diameter. This tree must have been planted, grown, reached maturity, fallen, and rotted away completely, all but the stump, since the hole was made, processes which could hardly have occupied less than a century, and probably a good deal more, which would carry back the digging of the hole in which the stump stood to a period long antecedent to the arrival of the first white

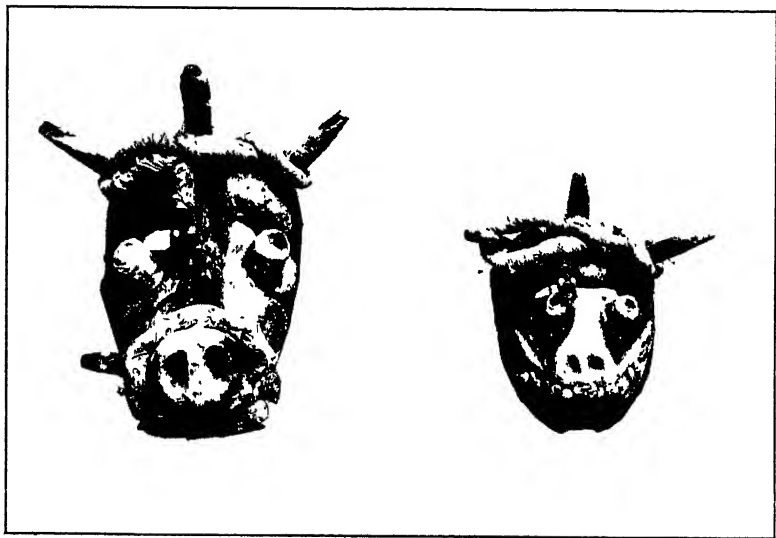
man in this part of the Colony. We were consequently forced to the conclusion that the excavations throughout the ruins had been made from one to three centuries ago, by the last degenerate Maya occupants, probably in search of weapons, ornaments, and other artifacts, which had been buried with the distinguished dead of their ancestors. That artifacts of the earlier inhabitants were used by the late-comers, is well exemplified in the case of a very fine spear-head, found in the river just opposite the ruins. This had first been covered by a fine, thin, white, porcelain-like patina, usually acquired only by long burial, adherent to which were curious red and yellow rings of some vegetable fungoid growth, apparently acquired in the water. Evidently it had been buried with one of the ancient inhabitants, dug up by one of the later occupants, and lost by him in the river, where we found it.

The Ancients, as is indicated by their custom of "killing" so many of the objects buried as funeral offerings, or as sacrifices to the gods, appear to have realised the possibility of grave robbers digging them up at some later date, while the later grave robbers themselves thoroughly realised the danger of having their own graves desecrated, for they "killed" practically everything buried with the dead, at the time of interment, and not only "killed" them, but so broadcast the fragments, that it has been found impossible to reconstruct completely any of their engraved plaques and figurines, most of which have been broken into small fragments in a manner most annoying to present-day excavators, to whom nothing more aggravating can occur than to find, say, a glyph-inscribed plaque, obviously recording its contemporary date, from which some essential glyph has been broken, making its decipherment impossible.

It was necessary to keep a constant watch on the men, for



MASKS OF TWO SOWS



MASKS OF BOAR AND SOW, FROM THE KEKCHI DEVIL DANCE

if they were left to themselves for even an hour, when one came back, one usually found them seated on the edge of the excavation, smoking and chatting. After I had caught them in this way several times, and threatened to discharge any of the gangs I found doing nothing, they placed pickets either at the edge of the bush, when they were working in the small burial mounds, or on top of one of the high mounds, when employed in the citadel itself, so that the first thing I heard on visiting a gang was a shrill whistle, while I was yet a long way off, and on arriving at the scene of activity, everyone was hard at work, though the amount which had been accomplished since my last visit would not indicate that this had been a sustained effort. It was only after careful observation that we succeeded in picking out the loafers and the malcontents, and once they had been discharged, and their bad example removed, the work went on smoothly, as most of the labourers, it must be admitted, did their not very efficient best.

At the bottom of the deep *barranco*, or gorge, which divides the ruins of the citadel from the ruined group to the west, runs a little brook, within a leafy tunnel formed by great cedar, Santa Maria, wild cotton, cuhoon, and other forest giants, which fill the bottom of the *barranco*, where the soil is rich and thick. In the dry season this little stream becomes a mere trickle, and may even dry up completely, for a week or two, into a string of stagnant pools; in the rainy season, especially after heavy rains in the hills at the back, it turns for a short time into a raging torrent, but unless the rains are very heavy and continuous, its rage soon evaporates, as it rapidly empties its surplus water into the river. Just to the west of the amphitheatre, the brook widens into a small lagoon, where the current is shallow and sluggish, and where, even on the hottest day, a damp chill

pervades the atmosphere, and a perpetual dim twilight reigns, for not the flicker of a sunbeam can enter here, owing to the dense vegetation with which it is surrounded and overshadowed. The bottom of this little pool is covered with a layer of whitish grey, rather rough pebbles, some oval, others nearly spherical, and many shaped like a turkey's egg, for all the world, in fact, such pebbles as one sees on an English sea beach, except for their colour. Yet never was beach seen composed of such pebbles as these, for they are neither more nor less than a collection of small sarcophagi, enclosing in a coat of lime salts, such diverse objects as water snails, seeds, a piece of bird's bone, a plant root, fragments of stick, indeed any object which may obtain lodgment in this little pool, and be subject for any considerable period to the action of the water, which is saturated with calcium salts. The water snails in their long pointed shells undergo, while alive, a process of slow petrification ; first a layer of lime is deposited on the back of the shell, which gradually extends towards the front, and little by little narrows the opening through which the mollusc protrudes itself for locomotor and feeding purposes, till at last this becomes too small for it to project any of its body, when presumably it dies. The layers of lime, both back and front, become thicker and thicker, till the opening is completely occluded, and in time the shell turns into a fat egg-shaped pebble, indistinguishable from any ordinary pebble till it is cracked, when the shell is found intact within. An almost spherical pebble, nearly as large as my fist, was found to contain, practically intact, the large seed of some tree, and pieces of stick of half an inch diameter, had swollen to three inches, and showed perfectly the lamination of the lime deposits. Possibly the most extraordinary find of all, however, was the lower half of a small

clay figurine, round which lime had been deposited, turning it into a flat smooth pebble. We found it quite an amusing pastime smashing these pebbles, first guessing what the nucleus was going to be, the only drawback to the sport being that the neighbourhood of the pool was infested with red bug, and invariably we found the inner sides of our thighs, and round our waists, covered with multitudes of these horrors, when we arrived home.

We decided to set fire to the bush, which had now been felled from two to six weeks, over the entire area covered by the citadel, with about four or five acres to the south of it. It looked very dry, but three days previously a heavy shower of rain had fallen and drenched everything, so we were not sure that the under parts of the heaps of trunks, branches, and leaves, would be dry enough to burn, but as our stay was limited to the dry season, and we were obliged to have the pyramids clear for photographic purposes, we determined to try.

Lady Brown, who is something of a pyromaniac, and loves to see the flames shoot up from the bellying smoke clouds, set formal fire to the nearest piece of brushwood close to my house, and immediately afterwards the professional Indian firer of plantations was on his way, with a couple of assistants, to set alight the whole twenty acres of dry bush, choosing strategic points where the fire would leave no islands unburnt, and above all would not attack our various leaf buildings. He used a long section of tinder-like rotten tree, which burnt briskly, and yet not very fast, at the end, and hardly seemed to touch the heaps of bush with this when they were alight. Soon the whole twenty acres was an immense roaring furnace, in the midst of which we stood on the cleared terrace upon which Muddy's and my houses were situated, now a little fire-encircled

island with dense clouds of smoke sweeping over it, and the crackling of burning branches like shrapnel, punctuated at intervals by the impressive boom of some great dead tree crashing to the ground, its base undermined by the all-consuming fire. This seemed a perfectly safe place before the conflagration began, as it was large, elevated, and perfectly clear from bush ; but soon it was enveloped in dense pungent wood smoke, which made it almost impossible to breathe without suffocating, and our eyes became so inflamed and congested that we had to bathe them constantly in a bucket of water to relieve the smarting, while we breathed through damp towels, in order to ease our choking lungs. Two Indians sat astride the thatch roof of each house, with kerosene tins full of water beside them, and crocus bags in their hands, and as the sparks settled on the inflammable dry thatch, their job was to beat them out quickly, before the whole roof caught. How the men stood the smoke we could not understand, for they were enveloped in such a dense cloud as at times to be invisible ten yards away, and yet they stuck to their posts for over two hours, howling and yelling at the top of their voices, as if they thoroughly enjoyed the job, beating out the sparks before they could do any damage. We were completely prostrated by the smoke and heat (the temperature rising at one time to 103 degrees) and the difficulty of breathing, but none of the Indians, even the boys, turned a hair, and they should, we agreed, make good firemen, if they only had a little more beef, and could be got to do steady work. The great *barranco*, through which the creek ran at the base of the ruins, was a most impressive sight, and gave one a realistic picture of the conventional idea of the infernal regions—an immense abyss filled with rolling clouds of dense smoke, from which shot at intervals great tongues of flame.

Perhaps the most gorgeous spectacle of all was to watch the dried lianas on some of the great forest trees, catch fire ; these giant creepers had been cut at the ground level some weeks before, and now hung loose, like great ropes from the branches, swaying in the wind, while their dried foliage and flowers, inflammable as torchwood, often occupied the greater part of the tree-top. As soon as the conflagration started, the dry ropes caught fire from the ground, when to see the flame shoot up them, and suddenly catch the dry foliage, turning the whole tree-top into an immense blazing torch 200ft. high, topping the dense oily smoke clouds, was a magnificent sight, and entirely unequalled by any human pyrotechnic display I have ever witnessed.

The bush had been lit about 11 o'clock, and at 2 o'clock we were nearly all in, wishing we had made our escape from the fire-encircled island before it had become impossible, and wondering whether we should be able to stand it out, when suddenly, from what ten minutes before had been a clear sky, the rain began to descend, clouds gathered rapidly, and a perfect deluge soon fell, almost completely quenching the fire, and turning the clouds of smoke into clouds of steam, only those old tindery stumps which, once alight, nothing but a flood can extinguish, still smouldering on. Unfortunately this shower came just at the wrong time, as the fire had not had time to consume the trunks and larger branches, so, while the underbush had completely disappeared, we were left with an intricate network of blackened timber to cut up and move before we could hope to get good photographs. With the inconsistency of human nature, though we were complaining bitterly of the intolerable heat and smoke half an hour before, we now complained even more bitterly of their sudden cessation.

On wandering about the fire-swept ruins after the rain, we found a number of carcasses of small animals, which had been caught in the flames and perished miserably by being roasted alive. These were chiefly frogs, lizards, and a few small rodents, but not a single snake was discovered. Insects had, of course, been completely incinerated, with the exception of certain big centipedes, with a lime-like shell which does not burn, great numbers of which were found, though we had never seen one before the fire. Ants must all have perished over the entire area, and yet a few days afterwards there were as many as before, while later in the afternoon botlas flies, sand flies, and tabanidae had invaded the ruins in as large numbers as ever, though we had hoped that the fire would have kept them off for a while, and afforded us at least a few days' peace.

The echoes about the ruins are very remarkable, and one cannot help wondering whether the buildings had not been constructed by the ancient inhabitants with a view to their production. Standing on my terrace, one could hear anyone talking, in even a low voice, upon the terrace, 200 yards to the south, quite as plainly indeed as if they were two instead of 200 yards distant. The sound in this case seemed to be reflected from the stone stairway forming the northern boundary of the terrace.

They have a little bell in the village, about half a mile away, which the Indians love to ring whenever the fancy takes them. It produces a feeble tinkle, hardly audible for quarter of a mile, but on our terrace, it is reflected from the hill to the west of the ruins, and its feeble tinkle actually seems to gain in volume, for it sounds clearer than when one is right beside it.

During the past week the men had been clearing the

amphitheatre and the sides of the great pyramids of bush, and restoring, as far as possible, the stone terraces and stairways on the north and south side of the amphitheatre. While clearing the south stairway, they came across two fragments of figurines, one the head and part of the bust of a helmeted figure, the other a portion of the bust of a woman. Near these lay a very nicely chipped, quite perfect, heart-shaped spear- or javelin-head. One can imagine that the clay figurines, being broken, had been thrown away by the owner, but how such a valuable piece of property as an entire spear-head must have been, came to be thus abandoned in the open is incomprehensible, unless indeed all of them had been deposited there as offerings to the gods of the arena.

CHAPTER XV

The Amphitheatre—Ingenious seating accommodation—Seats correspond to those of a modern theatre—Approaches to the amphitheatre—Accommodates an audience of 5,000 to 10,000 people—Unique amongst Maya ruins—Nature of the performance given in the arena in ancient days—Citadel largest aboriginal building on the American continent—Presented an imposing spectacle when occupied—Wasteful methods of agriculture—An impregnable fortress—The figurines—A cemetery belonging to the last occupation—Burials in the citadel by people of the latest occupation, and their contents—The ruins of an older city lie beneath the present citadel—Structures comprised in the citadel—Successive periods of occupation of the Lubaantun site.

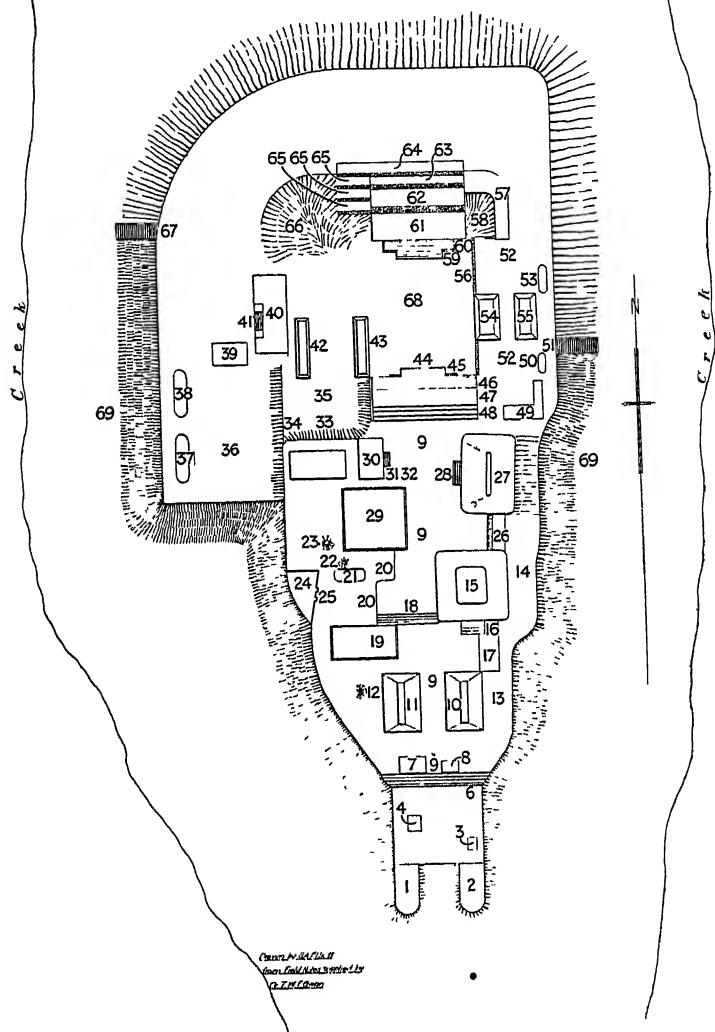
The amphitheatre was undoubtedly the most important spot in the whole citadel. (See plan.) The central space or arena is flat, smooth, nearly square, and occupies an area of about one-third of an acre. It had evidently been covered originally by a hard cement floor, the small stones of which still remain beneath the upper layer of humus. It is sunk 6ft. below the level of the *via sacra*, and is approached on all sides by entrances both from the citadel and from outside. The entire structure measures approximately 350ft. from east to west, by 300ft. from north to south, the greater part being taken up by what was evidently seating and standing accommodation for the spectators who came to view whatever spectacle was taking place in the arena. This accommodation is arranged in the most ingenious manner, to afford as many persons a good view as the space will permit. On the north is a sort of grand-stand, consisting below of rows of broad stone steps, and above these of three sloping terraces rising above each other to a total height of 34ft. The lowest terrace alone measures 114ft.

-PART OF LUBAANTUN-
-British Honduras-

British Honduras

—Scale of 88 Feet to 1 Inch—

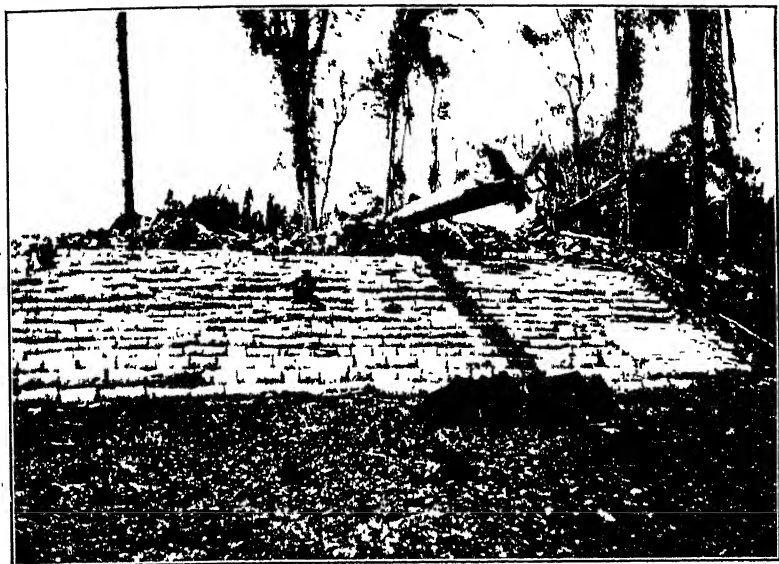
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PLAN OF PART OF LUBAANTUN

by 34ft., and could probably accommodate 600 or 700 persons in a squatting position, which is the one usually adopted by the Indians. Access to these terraces was not obtained, as might be supposed, by walking up the front steps, which must necessarily have interfered with the comfort of those occupying these seats when late comers arrived and endeavoured to push past them, an aggravating procedure, as patrons of the stalls in most modern theatres will admit. On the west was a great concave sloping space leading to four small terraces, which gave on the main front terraces, and it was by walking up this slope and across the smaller terraces that access was obtained to the larger ones. The small terraces and the great concave sloping space, which was duplicated on the east of the grand stand, also afforded accommodation to a great number of spectators. To the east is a platform raised 3ft. above the level of the arena, from the whole of which a good view could be obtained, while the back part of it contained low stone-faced pyramids upon which spectators stood. At the central part of this platform stand two stone-faced, flat-topped pyramids (54 and 55 on the plan), one directly behind the other, the back one 2ft. higher than the front one, so that spectators standing on it were enabled to see over the heads of those standing on the front pyramid. To the south of the arena was another grand-stand-like erection of steps faced with cut stone, from the whole of which an excellent view could be obtained, and to the west stood two stone-faced pyramids each 75ft. long, one exactly behind the other, the back one 2ft. higher than the front one, the flat cement-covered tops of which probably afforded sitting space for the royalty, nobility, and the chief priests of the city, as did also the summits of pyramids 54 and 55. An excellent view of the arena was also obtained from the summits of the great

pyramids, 27, 29, and 30. The seats in this amphitheatre, in fact, like those of a modern theatre, differed very much in their distance from, and the view which they afforded of, the central arena. The pyramid tops may be compared to the boxes, the front stone seats to the stalls, the north and south terraces to the dress circle and upper circle, while the accommodation upon the platform 52, and within the semi-circular hollows 58, and 66, would correspond perhaps most nearly to the pit and gallery respectively. The arena was approached on the west by a flight of stone steps leading up the steep side of the *barranco*, and it was by this route that the people living in the city to the west of the creek arrived. Those coming in from the south, if occupying the front seats of the southern pyramid or grand-stand, would no doubt walk up the four narrow terraces on the southern side of this, and then down to their seats on the northern slope, while for those taking the inferior accommodation on the slopes 58 and 66, the platform 52, and the small mounds behind it, a method of approach to their seats was provided by the sloping passage between the southern grand-stand and the great pyramid 27. At the point numbered 51 on the plan, is a stone stairway leading up the steep side of the citadel on to platform 52, and it was doubtless by this route that the dwellers in the ruins to the east reached the arena. When one observes that this great amphitheatre and the seating accommodation around it occupy nearly half the total area of the citadel, and that either from the tops of pyramids or terraces, the central arena is visible from over two-thirds of it, it must be obvious that this was by far the most important point in the citadel, around which probably the whole life of the community centred. Sitting accommodation is provided for at least 5,000 persons, or at a pinch possibly 10,000, so that a very



PART OF S GRAND STAND OR TIER OF STONE SEATS



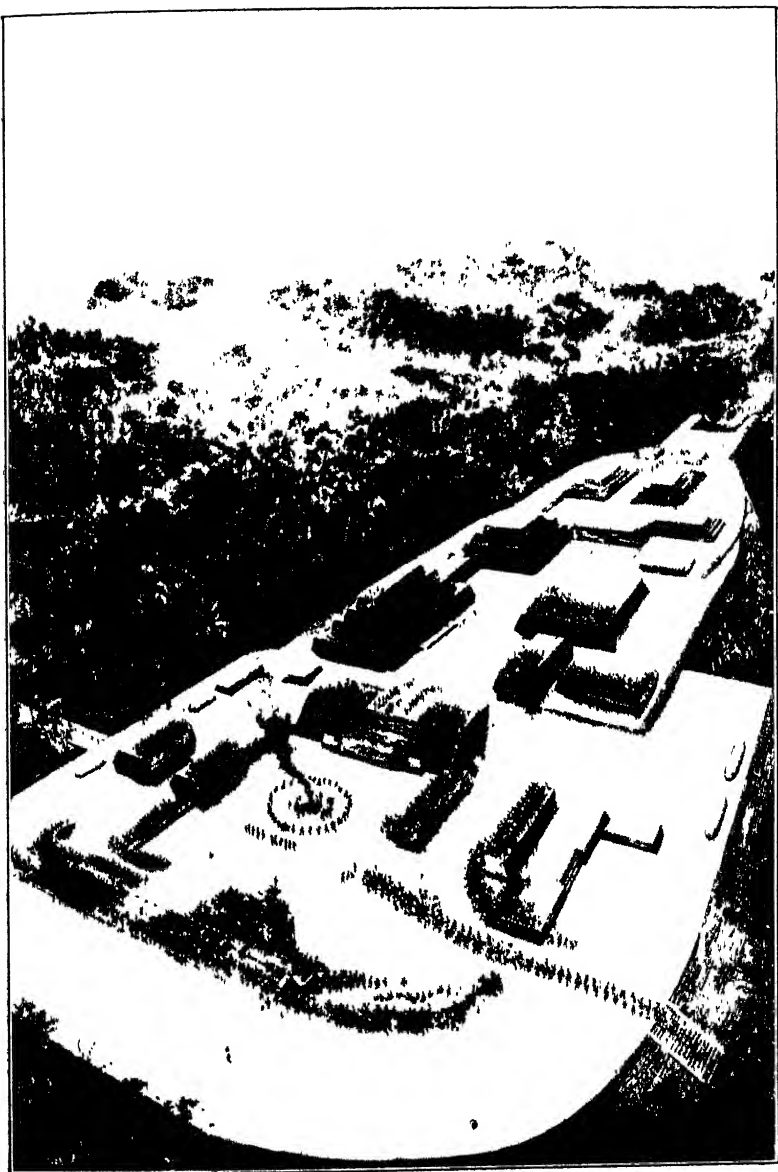
THE NORTHERN GRAND STAND, LUBAANTUN

large population must have been drawn upon from the surrounding districts if it were to be even moderately filled, and it is hardly conceivable that the builders would have expended the immense amount of labour which the construction of this structure must have involved, with nothing but stone tools available, unless they were certain that adequate use would be made of it.

There is not in the whole area occupied by the ancient Maya, whether during the Old or New Empire, a single structure at all analogous to this. Stone-faced pyramids and *plazas* exist in plenty, but this is the single instance in which the *plaza* has been converted into an arena, and the pyramids into grand-stands, with the obvious intention of affording a view of some spectacle or ceremony to a large concourse of people. The question naturally arises, what did the people come to see that was of such surpassing interest and importance as to draw what would be a fair audience for a league football match in England, or baseball game in the U.S.A., for this amphitheatre would more than hold the entire present population of the Toledo District of British Honduras, and very nearly the entire adult male population of the whole colony. Was it a gladiatorial show? Was it a game, or athletic contest of some sort? Was it a religious ceremony? None of these, I think, but rather a dramatic entertainment accompanied by music and singing, in fact, the ancient Maya equivalent of the modern revue. We know from Landa and other chroniclers who wrote soon after the Conquest, that the Maya were extraordinarily fond of this sort of performance, and that even small villages possessed their own dance platforms and troupes of performers. Moreover, such plays as the Devil Dance, which has already been described, have been continued right up to the present day, probably with very little alteration.

We may consequently, I think, fairly conclude that it was a semi-dramatic performance of this kind which took place in the arena, and when one sees how the Maya of the present day pour in from an area of many miles from all the surrounding country to spend the entire day witnessing such a performance, which men, women, and children will watch for hours at a stretch, standing perfectly entranced, regardless of heat, dust, or discomfort, nothing but a few dry corn cakes to eat, and nowhere but a hammock in a crowded hut to sleep in, whole families living for days in what to us would appear the utmost discomfort and inconvenience, it is easy to realise that the amphitheatre might be filled to capacity and even require the "House Full" notice, when the whole region was densely populated, as it must have been in the days when the builders of the city flourished. The love of dramatic entertainment accompanied by slow monotonous music, continuing for hours without break or interval, is in the blood of the Maya, and will probably last as long as the race. This and alcohol are practically the only two forms of relaxation which he enjoys in a life which is singularly colourless and monotonous.

The citadel is, so far as my experience goes, absolutely unique. It occupies approximately seven and a half acres of ground, every foot of which was covered originally by cut stone or hard white cement. It may indeed be regarded as one immense building, the largest single aboriginal structure on the American continent, presenting the extraordinary combination of fortress, theatre, and religious centre. When we first came upon it, it was buried in the dense tropical forest, and one might have passed within fifty yards of the largest pyramid without detecting its presence, but in the days of its greatness, when, covered by cut limestone and hard cement, it stood up like a glittering snow-white island,



MAYA CITADEL : A RECONSTRUCTION

Drawing by A. Forester; reproduced by permission of the Illustrated London News

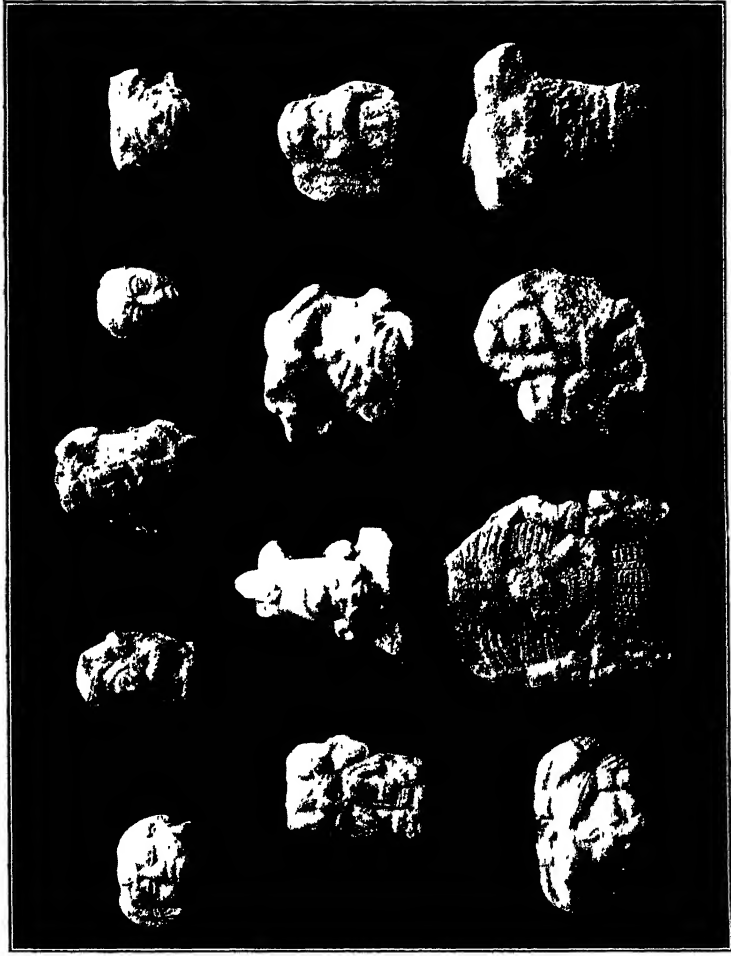
50ft. high, ringed by a circle of the brown bush huts of the common people, and further out by the thousands of acres of green waving maize, which must have been necessary for the support of the great population which the citadel and the ruins around it indicate, it must have been a truly magnificent spectacle. The population in those days was very dense, for though we did not have time on this occasion for much else besides the citadel, owing to the great amount of work to be done there, and the difficulty in obtaining any kind of native labour, we nevertheless came across extensive stone ruins at several points both to the east and west of the citadel, and reports have been brought in by Indian hunters of others which exist in the bush miles away to the north, east, and west, which have never yet been trodden by the feet of Europeans.

Excellent though the soil is for the cultivation of maize, a far more intensive cultivation must have been employed by the ancients than that in use by their degenerate descendants, which is wasteful in the extreme, though exceedingly simple and only possible where a small agricultural population has good and practically unlimited land at their disposal. Each year a piece of virgin bush is felled about December, allowed to dry in the sun till early in May, and then burnt off. Over this area corn is planted by the simple expedient of making a series of holes with a pointed stick, into each of which half-a-dozen or so grains are dropped. The work is all done communally by each village, every man helping his neighbour both to fell the bush and plant the corn. The more careful agriculturalist clears off the growing bush with his machete before the corn ripens, but the usual shiftless Indian simply leaves it to Providence, and when the corn is ripe, gathers in whatever corn the weeds, birds, wild hogs, and insects have left him. The land takes several

years to recover, during which fresh patches of virgin bush are being used by the villagers, and mahogany, cedar, sapodillo, and other valuable wood and gum trees are, of course, destroyed in the process, for if not chopped down they are killed by the subsequent fire. Another sure indication of the density of the former population, and the length of time over which the site must have been occupied, was the enormous number of potsherds, broken figurines, flint, and obsidian chips, and other indestructible refuse found upon the surface of the soil in all directions.

The citadel must have formed a practically impregnable fortress, for, surrounded as it was on all sides by stone-faced almost perpendicular walls, varying from 40 to 60ft. in height, it would have been almost impossible to take by direct assault with a force whose only arms were bows and arrows and spears, and it would have been equally difficult to starve the garrison out, for water could be obtained from wells within the fortress itself, and the Maya soldier could live indefinitely on maize alone, great quantities of which were always stored for emergencies in underground granaries, or *chultunes*.

Amongst the most interesting discoveries at Lubaantun were the figurines. They were found with burials (especially in Mounds A and B) lying just below the vegetal humus, within the citadel, and in *milpas* around the ruins. They divide themselves into various types, though many single pieces belong to no particular type. There are seven figurines of women. In one the woman is kneeling at a small table or altar, in a second she holds in the right hand a basket of small spherical objects, probably fruit or cakes, and in the left hand the head of a man; in a third she has a great protuberance in the lower abdomen and is evidently enceinte; two hold round pots, one in the hand, the other



FIGURINES FROM BURIAL MOUND.

3, 4, 7, PROBABLY PORTRAITS 8, PRONOUNCED MONGOLIAN TYPE. 10, ELABORATE COIFFEUR.
11, CHIEF OR GOD IN BASKET. 13, FEMALE BUST IN CORSET-LIKE GARMENT

[p. 222

under the arm, and all show something of the costume and ornaments worn. The dress was evidently a short-sleeved, low-necked garment very much like the *huipil* worn by the modern Maya, and a cotton skirt corresponding to the modern *pik*. Elaborate necklaces of several rows of beads were worn, with pendants, and a scarf-like object was carried in the hands in two cases. The embroidery upon the *huipils* is very elaborate, and in some cases covered with what appear to be ornamental studs. Another very common type is that of the masked figure. This individual wears a mask closely resembling a steel helmet with the vizor open. In the only instance where the whole of this figure was found, the ornament above the mask had been broken off, but in a broken head it is represented as a solar disc surmounted by plumes of feathers. Extending outwards from the sides of the mask are folds of drapery. The figure wears a short cape to the shoulders, and in front of the neck, an object like a barrister's tie. The rest of the figure is dressed in conventional Indian costume, consisting of *maxtli*, or loin cloth, wristlets, anklets, and sandals. The tiger is represented five times amongst the figurines. The only entire one found shows an anthropomorphic figure with a tiger's claws instead of hands and feet, and a tiger's head and tail. The tiger's head is also employed as a headdress for two human faces. Perhaps one of the most remarkable types shows a coiffure almost exactly like a judge's wig. This is found repeated seven times; unfortunately no complete figurine of this type was found. Four cherub-like faces were found, probably of women, as in one where the lower abdomen still remains, it is swollen as if to indicate the presence of a foetus. In addition to those already described the following figurines were found :

1. An old woman's face, rather well modelled, probably a portrait.

2. A completely naked male figure, in a squatting position.

3. Two figures, probably female, in corset-like garments very tight-fitting to just above the breasts (in one case the breasts are very clearly indicated above the upper edge of the garment).

Nude figurines were very rare amongst the Maya, but we found two at Lubaantun, one that of a man in a squatting position, the other an enceinte woman, evidently from the prominence of the uterus, very near her full time. An anthropomorphic figurine terminating behind in a whistle in the shape of a pig's head was found in the ruined Maya city of Naranjo in the Peten district of Guatemala. This city belongs undoubtedly to the Old Empire, and a number of stelæ erected in it bear dates in the ninth Maya cycle, and belong to the sixth century A.D. How a single object of marked Lubaantun type can have found its way so far north, to a city belonging to a completely different type of Maya culture, is one of those mysteries which only intensive work in the Maya field can solve.

There can be little doubt but that these figurines belong to periods of Maya culture separated by long intervals of time. The tiger god (page 142) is almost an exact replica of the sculpture on an altar at Copan, and the head with Muan bird head-dress (opposite) might have been the work of the same artist who sculptured a similar head at Palenque. These two are undoubtedly of typical Maya Old Empire style, as is also a headless figure holding a fan. On the other hand, the curious little plaque showing a chief, or god, seated in a basket, supported on a pole borne on the shoulders of two retainers, is almost certainly of



SPEAR, AXE, AND GOUGES



FIGURINE WITH MUAN BIRD HEAD-DRESS, SIMILAR
TO ONE FOUND AT OLD EMPIRE CITY OF PALENQUE

Maya Quichè origin, and is separated stylistically by 1,000 years from the Old Empire types. Amongst the figurines found near the surface by Indians in making their corn plantations, as already mentioned, were two which undoubtedly belong to post-Conquest days. One of them represents a man in mediæval European dress, the other a horse, an animal unknown to the Indians before the coming of Europeans, indicating that their manufacture was continued in this region for some considerable time after the Conquest.

Just to the west of Mounds A and B stood a natural hill of considerable size, upon the summit and sides of which were ruins of walls and stone-faced platforms. It had been used by the latest inhabitants as a cemetery, and a number of small sepulchral mounds, all belonging to the last period of occupancy, were opened. These were all practically identical in both construction, size, and contents, so only a single typical one need be described. This was roughly circular, 25ft. in diameter, 3ft. high in the centre, and built throughout of rubble, earth, and fragments of shale, with a few squared stones evidently taken from the ruins. Almost exactly in the centre of the mound, and resting upon the ground level, was found the skeleton of a single adult, who had been buried on his back in the extended position. The bones were in a very rotten condition, as they had been directly in contact with the earth, and quite unprotected from moisture. It was impossible, from the bones, to tell the sex of the individual, but judging by the teeth it was a young adult, and by the objects buried with it, a male. By the side of the head lay a small, spherical, red ware pot, and a shallow saucer-shaped vessel, both in fragments. Scattered irregularly throughout the mound, the following objects were brought to light :

1. A greenstone celt; the cutting edge broken, but trimmed down, evidently with the idea of re-grinding a fresh edge.

2. A perfect celt, one and a half inches long, of greenish grey stone.

3. A hexagonal disc of hæmatite, three-quarters of an inch long, nicely polished.

4. An oval piece of polished, light green jadeite, one inch in length, perforated for suspension, and decorated by means of the hollow drill with geometrical devices.

5. The small head of an old man, in pottery.

6. Part of a clay plaque showing a human figure, apparently that of a woman, kneeling beside an altar or table.

7. A pottery head of Aztec type.

The other burial mounds in this cemetery contained objects almost precisely similar to these, in addition to hammer stones, clay beads, obsidian knives, shell ornaments, and *malacates* or spindle-whorls, and judging by the appearance of the bones they all belonged to approximately the same period.

On the summit of Structure 27, within the citadel, were found two burials very similar to those last described. This structure is a large stone-faced pyramid surrounded by three terraces. It measures 66ft. east and west by 99ft. north and south. On the west side it is 30ft. high, and on the east side, where it is joined by a terrace to the citadel wall, it measures 86ft. The summit is flat, and had originally been covered with cement. No trace of any building existed upon it. An endeavour was made to sink a hole from the summit of this pyramid to the ground level, but it was found that it was built throughout of immense blocks

of limestone, and when a depth of twenty feet had been reached, we had to desist, as, even aided by pulleys, it was realised that with the labour and time at our disposal, our object could not be accomplished during the field season, for the Indians were physically incapable of dealing with the immense masses of stone which were encountered at the bottom of the deep excavation.

In sinking the hole, however, two interesting discoveries were made; the first, that a wall of neatly-squared stones, running north and south, bisected the mound apparently from summit to base. The central part of this wall had sunk several feet, as if from the subsidence of the roof of a chamber at the bottom of the mound, though as the bottom of the mound was not reached, we were unfortunately unable to ascertain definitely whether this had been the case. The second discovery consisted of two burials of the last occupation, one near the centre, the other near the southern edge of the flat summit. In the central burial the bones were found eighteen inches beneath the surface. They were in a poor state of preservation, being unprotected from the rain by any cist or chamber, and were apparently those of a middle-aged adult, buried in the extended dorsal position. Near the head was a broken hemispherical vessel of red pottery, six inches in diameter, together with the leg bones of a deer, close to which were fragments of two small obsidian knives. By the side was found the head of an owl, in pottery from which projected a plume of feathers, the whole having evidently formed the head-dress of a clay figurine. In the second burial the bones were found at the same depth, and in a similar position, but nothing accompanied them except a spherical pot, and a few fragments of obsidian knives at the head. These graves were evidently those of people of the last occupation who had utilised the summit of the

mound as a burial place, instead of the region to the south of the citadel, or Flora's *milpa*, where most of their dead were deposited.

It was when excavating Mounds 12 and 22, both situated on the west side of the *via sacra*, that our attention was drawn to the fact that beneath the present citadel there exist the ruins of an older city. Mound 12 was situated in a small *plaza* immediately to the west of the stone-faced pyramid, numbered 11 on the plan. It was an insignificant little structure, roughly circular in shape, and four feet high in the centre. The upper part was composed of rubble and boulders, the lower of tightly packed pebbles and small stones. Running east and west through the mound were found two walls built of nicely squared stones, their tops six inches beneath the surface. They were fifteen feet apart, and the space included between them corresponded to the centre of the mound. Within this space, at a depth of two feet below the surface, were found the following objects :

1. A piece of animal bone.
2. A large, circular, perforated stone, six inches in diameter, possibly used as a club-head.
3. A flint axe-head covered with a fine white patina.
4. An obsidian javelin-head.
5. Four cowries, perforated for use as beads.
6. What looked like a clay pipe, but with no perforation through the stem.
7. Part of the head and one arm of a clay figurine.

The bases of the containing walls rested on a layer of shale and rubble, forming a tough compact mass, on digging into which, at a depth of one foot, was found a hard cement floor beneath which was a second wall built of squared stones fitted with meticulous care, running north and south. This

wall rested on a foundation of immense blocks of stone, with a certain amount of friable mortar holding them together, and on making an excavation in this layer we discovered the following objects :

1. Two fragments of very fine thin pottery, beautifully coloured in red, yellow, and black.
2. A potsherd with geometrical devices incised through a white slip.
3. A fragment of the lid of a vase of blackish brown ware, with moulded devices, precisely similar to the Old Empire pottery found at Holmul.

Mound 22 was situated to the west of the great stone-faced platform numbered 29 on the plan. It was roughly circular, 24ft. in diameter, and 5½ft. high at the highest point. It was built of rubble, earth, and large blocks of limestone. At a depth of three feet was found a cache of bones of the following animals—lizard, rodent, large river fish, bird, some large mammal, probably a tapir, together with cutos and snail shells. These bones were covered with a layer of limestone dust, which appears to have preserved them from the effects of the heavy rainfall of Lubaantun, as all were in comparatively good state of preservation ; with them was a small unfinished green-stone chisel. We extended the excavation beneath this burial, and came upon a beautifully built cut-stone wall, running north and south, whose base rested upon a layer of great blocks of stone. By the side of this wall were numerous loose cut stones, and large quantities of smooth stucco, some plain, some painted, which had evidently at one time covered the wall of a building. It is difficult to see for what purpose ~~these~~ two mounds had been erected in prominent positions in the citadel. They cannot have been burial mounds, as no

trace of human bones was found, nor can these have disintegrated, for the animal bones discovered were in an excellent state of preservation. The only possible explanation, and not, it must be admitted, a very convincing one, is that they contained sacrificial objects dedicated to the gods of the city, consisting of the main fish, flesh, and fowl used by the people, and a sample of their best work in stone implements and weapons. Whatever the use of the mounds however, there can be no doubt but that they stood upon the foundations, and parts of the walls, of an older city. In Mound 12 the pottery fragments found in the deepest layer were Old Empire Maya work, quite different from those found in any part of the present city of Lubaantun, while in Mound 22 the squared stone wall, stucco fragments, and solid foundation beneath the mound, were evidently relics of a period when stucco covered temples and palaces existed, where now stand only great stone-faced pyramids and platforms. In fact, beneath Lubaantun as we see it to-day lie the ruins of an older city, which can only be made to yield up its secrets with the expenditure of an immense amount of patience, time, and labour, for the solid stone structures of the present city will have to be removed little by little in order to reach the older buildings.

STRUCTURES COMPRISED WITHIN THE CITADEL

1 & 2. Projections from the southern end of 5, the terrace or platform upon which were erected :

3. My house.

4. ~~The~~ men's quarters.

5. This terrace is 110ft. square, 24ft. high on the east, and 30ft. on the west side,

6. A flight of stone steps 20ft. high, leading to the southern end of the *via sacra*.

7 & 8. Two stone-faced platforms, now much ruined.

9. The *via sacra*, leading from the summit of the stone stairway to the southern end of the amphitheatre, and originally covered with white cement.

10 & 11. Two stone-faced pyramids, each 12ft. high.

12. Mound containing stone weapons.

13 & 14. Terraces.

15. Large stone-faced mound, with three narrow terraces leading to a flat summit.

16. Stone stairway leading up this mound.

17. Low stone-faced mound.

18. Stairway 3ft. high crossing the *via sacra*, and leading to the higher level of its northern part.

19. Stone-faced platform.

20. Stone-faced terrace.

21. Sunk *plaza*.

22 & 23. Circular mounds.

24. Small triangular sunk *plaza* on the edge of the citadel wall.

25. Stone-faced wall with recesses, bounding 24.

26. Small platform, with steps on its western side, joining pyramids 15 and 27.

27. Stone-faced pyramid with three terraces and flat summit approached by stairway 28.

29. Large stone-faced platform, the flat top surrounded by a cut stone wall.

30. Platform approached by a flight of steps, 31.

32. Site of small mound covering subterranean chamber.

33. Cut stone wall leading down to 35, a *plaza*.

34. Steps leading from 35 to 36, a *plaza* on a lower level.

37 & 38. Two long, stone-faced mounds, now very much ruined.

39. Stone-faced platform.

40. Platform with a flight of steps, 41, leading to its summit.

42 & 43. Stone-faced pyramids with flat tops, from which could be obtained a good view of the arena.

44. Flight of broad stone steps with sloping walls on each side, 45.

46. Flight of narrower stone steps leading to 47, the flat summit of the great southern grand-stand overlooking the arena.

48. Narrow stone terraces leading from the summit to the *via sacra*.

49, 50 & 53. Stone-faced platforms with flat summits affording a view of the arena.

51. Stone stairway leading up the side of the citadel.

52 & 52. Sloping platform bounded by wall, 56, from which a good view of the arena was obtained.

54 & 55. Stone-faced pyramids with flat summits.

57. Curved, flat-topped platform, and, 58, sloping space from both of which a good view existed of the arena.

59 & 60. Broad stone stairway leading to 61, 62, 63 and 64, terraces from all of which the arena could be viewed. The total height of this northern grand-stand-like structure was 34ft.

65, 65 & 65. Secondary terraces by which the main terraces were approached, which themselves were filled by a stream of people coming up the sloping space 66. From both 65 and 66 a good view of the arena was obtained.

67. ~~Stairway~~ leading up the side of the citadel.

68. The arena, or central space, around which the other structures are grouped.

69. The stone-faced wall of the citadel, varying from 40 to 60 feet in height.

There appear to have been at Lubaantun at least three different periods of occupancy, as indicated by the buildings themselves, and by the artifacts brought to light. During the earliest of these occupations the underground edifices were built, remains of which were discovered beneath Mounds 12 and 22. To this period may, I think, be assigned all subterranean walls, and probably the lower part of the northern and southern grand-stands. What were the artifacts associated with this occupation only prolonged excavation in the older structures is likely to show, but I think it probable that the very fine painted, stamped, and polished potsherds found beneath Mound 12 belong to this period. The second period of occupancy is represented by the pyramids, and the outer skins added, for the purpose of enlarging and rendering these more spectacular, at a later period; the construction of the upper part of the southern grand-stand, and probably the covering with hard white cement of the tops of the pyramids, the *via sacra*, and most of the *plazas*. To this period belong probably the best of the clay figurines, some of which may go back to the earliest period. The latest period is represented by the graves to the south of the citadel, those in Flora's *milpa*, those on the summit of Mound 15, those in Mounds A and B, and on the hill to the east of these. These mounds divide themselves naturally into two classes, namely, those which contain figurines and small sculptured plaques, and those which do not. The latter, containing nothing but a few crude pots, stone implements, and ornaments, represent the burial places of the ancestors of the present occupants of the forest around the ruins, with whom, as already pointed

out, precisely similar funerary objects are interred at the present day.

What strikes one perhaps as most wonderful about the ruins is the extraordinary amount of labour involved in carefully and accurately squaring such an immense number of blocks of hard limestone. At least a million separate blocks have been worked, and how, with no other implements than hammer stones of flint (of which great numbers were found in the ruins) and chisels of chert and hornstone, such an apparently impossible task can have been accomplished, passes comprehension. I tried working one of these limestone blocks myself, with an ancient flint hammer, and when I accomplished the squaring of one stone per day, I considered that I had done a very strenuous day's work. Moreover, the condition of my hands would not have allowed me to do any similar work for at least a week.

CHAPTER XVI

Milpas finished, but epidemic of 'flu commences—Epidemics ascribed to devils liberated by the excavation of burial mounds—Cures for the death complex—My danger from the *pica sombra*—Primitive furniture and the simple life—Limited wardrobe—Alcohol the curse of the Maya—The entire human race less resistant to alcohol than formerly—The Indians will give anything to get rum—A bold hawk—A curious use for boards—Civilising influence of a wooden coffin—An opportunist—Our labourers quit work—Impossible to get Indian labour next year—Kekchi poor labourers—Next year we shall use negroes—Tame lizards—Hedges and my cook both stricken with the epidemic—A jaguar and cub around the hut at night—Attracted to village by pigs—Hedges has temperature of 105 degrees—We leave Lubaantun—Regrets—Christening of streams bounding the ruins—Gallego and his speculation in pork—Arrival in Punta Gorda, and trip to Water Cay—Terrific thunderstorm—The *Cara* struck by lightning—Narrow escape from falling mast—Mitchell Hedges passes an anxious night ashore.

WE were very unfortunate in our labourers. First they had to cut the bush for their corn plantations, work from which no offers of wages, however attractive, will take them, as corn is their one and only bulwark against starvation; not only does it supply their staple diet, the tortilla, but it is necessary for the raising of pigs and fowls, by the sale of which they can procure enough money to buy cotton cloth for garments, machetes for bush-clearing, and rum, which comprise the simple essentials of their lives. This *milpa* work done, an epidemic somewhat resembling influenza broke out in the village. Several deaths occurred amongst the population of approximately 250. Some of our best labourers were affected, and several more had to stop at home and attend to their families, for there was hardly a single hut in the whole village which had not got someone

sick in it. Unfortunately, many of the villagers ascribed the trouble to the clearing and excavations of the ruins, by which they asserted devils were let loose, who had now taken up their abode in the village and afflicted it with this epidemic of sickness. I pointed out to them that the mortality had not been especially high amongst those who worked for us in the ruins, and that we ourselves had been entirely free from the sickness. To this argument they answered, firstly, that one of the earliest to die was a boy who worked for us, and had at his own request to be removed from excavation work to bush-clearing, as he asserted that devils came out of the graves he dug into, and haunted him at night ; secondly, that the devils had no concern with us, as they were not our ancestors whose last sleep has been disturbed by their descendants ; and, finally, that they must just "dree their weird," which they promptly proceeded to do by curling up, and making up their minds to die as soon as the 'flu got a hold of them—a most aggravating state of mind, and one very difficult to combat, though canned soup, a little alcohol, and liberal doses of ammoniated quinine yanked a few of them back who had made up their minds that they were headed for the next world, where they fully expected to encounter ancestors with a bone to pick in the matter of grave desecration. Though we were supposed to be immune to the attacks of devils released from the ruins, we were, like everyone else, subject to the attacks of the *pica sombra*, or shadow biter. This is a small green lizard which trails one about, with the object, as his name indicates, of biting one's shadow. If he can do this, and then reach water and drink before his victim, the latter dies ; if, on the other hand, the victim reaches water first and drinks, the *pica sombra* dies. I encouraged lizards of all sorts and sizes in and around my house, as they devour spiders, ants,

scorpions, and all sorts of objectionable insects, and, as the creek was about a hundred feet distant from the back door, most of the way perpendicular, I was supposed to be in rather a precarious position, as the *pica sombra*, after getting in his fell work, would certainly be able to reach water before me.

One can hardly realise how few articles are really essential to existence till they visit a Kekchi Indian's hut. The only furniture consists of two or three blocks of wood or small boxes six or eight inches high, used as chairs, and a large strip of moho bark, supported on a barbecue, or platform of sticks, or simply laid on the floor, which serves the owner as a bed during his life, and as a combined coffin and shroud after death. Three stones placed at the angles of a triangle form the fireplace, and a few crude earthen pots, with a flat disc, known as a *comal*, for baking corn cakes, the cooking outfit. Add to these a dozen calabashes of different sizes, for eating and drinking from, and the inventory is complete. There are no tables, knives, forks, or spoons, as the family take their food in calabashes, squat in one of the little seats or on the strip of bark, place the calabashes on the ground, and deal with the contents by means of their fingers, assisted by a piece of corn cake. We provided our labourers with seats and a table, but they preferred to eat their food from the ground, though at times there was a strong wind blowing, and they must have consumed nearly as much dust as food. The wardrobes of both men and women are equally simple. The women usually wear but one garment—a rather short cotton petticoat—and are quite naked above the waist, though most of them wear great necklaces of coloured glass beads and seeds, and, when they can get them, small silver coins of the Republic of Guatemala. The men usually possess two suits of cotton ; one—nothing but

an elaborate network of patches and holes—they wear when at work ; the other is for use in the evening, and at *fiestas*. Neither men nor women wear any foot-covering, but the skin on the soles of their feet has become so hard and thick that they can step with impunity on a lansetta thorn, which would penetrate the sole of an ordinary tennis shoe. Above the ankles, however, their skin is often dark in colour, roughened, and covered with the scars of old wounds inflicted by thorns, brambles, and cutting grass, and *granos*, and chronic ulcers in this situation are very common.

The curse of the Maya Indian of to-day is alcohol. It changes him from a quiet, peace-loving, hard-working citizen into a raving lunatic, ready to slit his best friend open with a machete, with or without provocation ; it undermines his by no means strong constitution, usually brings about his early death, and is both surely and rapidly wiping out the last remnant of the once great Maya race. Yet the ancient Maya had ceremonial orgies, at which vast quantities of *balchè* (a fermented corn liquor, to which had been added an infusion prepared from the juice of various roots and leaves) were drunk. At these, which were of frequent occurrence, it was etiquette for everyone to become intoxicated. These orgies were continued over a period of fifteen centuries before the coming of the Spaniards, and yet they did not appear to have produced any sensible degeneration in the race as a whole, or to have checked the natural increase of the population. Our own ancestors were two-, three-, and four-bottle men, who seldom went to bed sober, and in former days the West Indian was classified as a one-, five-, or ten-cocktail man (I once knew a nineteen man, but he was a Scot, and the cocktails were compounded from his native liquor), and beef and beer form the traditional foundation upon which the Empire was built. One wonders whether

some cosmic change, atmospheric or magnetic, can have occurred during the last century, involving the whole earth, and rendering the human race more irritable, and less tolerant of alcohol, or whether the tremendous intellectual development during the same period has not rendered us more neurotic and highly strung, and so brought about the same result, and originated the protective wave of temperance which has swept the world in recent years. To-day the Indian drinks poisonous adulterated cane rum, which smells like varnish and tastes like wood alcohol. He not only drinks it ceremonially at *fiestas*, as in former days, but in between, whenever and wherever he can get it, and if it is withheld by the Government he will get drunk on an even more pernicious liquor, which he manufactures himself from fermented cane juice, the result being that alcoholism has become the bane of the Indians. Whatever shreds of morality contact with modern civilisation had left the Maya are also being rapidly drowned in alcohol. Men, women, and children drink just as much as they can in any way acquire of any kind of intoxicant. Just before Holy Week, a San Antonio man, Juan Canchè, came to us for some money, and, as he was a hefty specimen, he got an advance of \$15 for one month's work, and was entrusted with \$6 to buy eggs and chickens in his village. The Monday after Holy Week arrived, but no Juan, and, as he had not turned up by Wednesday, we sent the native constable to fetch him—at a cost to him of \$1. He was discovered in a semi-comatose condition, just recovering from the effects of a terrific debauch lasting from Good Friday to Easter Monday, in which he had spent the whole \$21 in rum, not giving his wife and family of half a dozen children a cent for food. He was haled back by the native constable, a truly pitiable object, for it requires a week to get over the effects of this

awful rum. His wife had very rightly refused to make him any corn cakes to take with him to his work, so for nearly the entire four weeks he had to work out his \$21 advance on a straight diet of pork and beans, taking nothing home at the end of the time for his unfortunate family, and yet, when I remonstrated with him, he professed to consider the money well spent, as it afforded him a delightful memory of which nothing could rob him! Moreover, I am certain this man would do precisely the same thing again if the opportunity came in his way.

One day I saw a moving picture of the Mexican coat of arms—an eagle sitting on a cactus with a snake grasped in his claws. A huge grey hawk flew over the house with a serpent at least four feet long trailing below him; he had got a firm hold of the reptile's neck in his claws, but it was just as much as he could do to clear the roof of my shack, and the snake's tail actually touched the top of the thatch roof. The neighbourhood was full of hawks of all sizes, which may account for the scarcity of snakes that we all noticed. This same hawk, or one exactly like him, carried off one of my good-sized chickens about a week previously, from right in front of the house, where Muddy was working at the time. The chicken was heavy, and he was not able to levitate it immediately, but had to get along the terrace in a series of skips, at each of which the chicken touched the ground, squalling vigorously. As soon as he reached the edge of the *barranco*, where there was a drop of twenty feet, he launched out gracefully into space, and was soon only a speck rapidly disappearing over the bush.

I brought a dozen small planks up at the bottom of the dug-out when I arrived, to make a floor for my shack, never imagining that I should be able to dispose of them when we left the ruins, but the *Alcalde* came and made me an offer

of the same price I had paid for them in Belize. I was tremendously curious to know what he intended to do with them, for I felt sure he did not want them to floor his own house, as he was too indifferent to comfort even to go to the trouble of putting ridging on the roof, so that when it rains the middle of the floor has to be avoided, and the family cling around the walls if they do not wish to enjoy a shower-bath. The explanation proved simple ; being newly elected to the *Alcalde*-ship, he considered that he ought to prove an uplifting influence to his people, and the first step along these lines was to get them to use nice civilised wooden coffins instead of taking their last sleep on the strip of moho bark on which they had slept all their lives. But no planks were available, and it would have been far too costly to get them up from Punta Gorda ; so this was a heaven-sent opportunity, and, as an epidemic of influenza was raging in the village at the same time, from which several persons had already died, and from which about half the village was still suffering, the demand for coffins in the near future was likely to be brisk, while, with all the available lumber in sight, he would be the only one in a position to fill it.

The gang became gradually reduced to our original number of four labourers, and these were all men from San Antonio. It was with the greatest difficulty that we got them to stop for the last couple of days, and it was only by promising to give them no digging, but to employ them exclusively in cleaning the terrace walls, at the northern side of the *plaza*—work which a ten-year-old child could accomplish, but which was essential if we were to get good photographs—that we got them to stop at all. The Indians from San Pedro, the village nearest the ruins, all left the work, having got thoroughly scared ; they made all sorts of excuses, but simply refused to return. Even the San

Antonio men, who are not nearly so superstitious, and, living at a distance from the ruins, were not constantly overshadowed by a dread of the devils and other supernatural beings, all malignant towards humanity, who inhabit them, were infected more or less by the aura of fear created by the San Pedranos, and took a sort of mental inventory of themselves each morning to see whether they had suffered any physical or psychic injury during the night. They reminded me of parrots on a tree, which one has approached within the fifty-yard mark. They don't want to leave the fruit, but hang poised for flight at any moment, when they consider the danger-zone has been reached. So these men hated to leave a well-paid, soft job, but they felt that some sort of danger hung over them, and on the first manifestation of its presence were prepared to flit. We started with four labourers, and by degrees increased this number to twenty-five, but these gradually dwindled to four again, and I feel sure that next year it will be almost impossible for us to get the local Indians to work at any price. They are indifferent workers, and the best of them never deliver more than fifty cents' worth of work for their dollar a day, even at felling bush, to which they are most accustomed, while the worst do not accomplish twenty-five cents worth of work a day. Physically they are poor specimens, and not accustomed to continuous work. Moreover, their constitutions are undermined by alcohol and malaria, while hookworm, enlarged spleen, and anæmia have combined, with poor diet and an hereditary disinclination to any sort of prolonged exertion, to render them perhaps the least efficient labourers in Central America. When we resume work at the beginning of the next dry season, we shall bring with us a gang of Belize Creoles, who are good workers, cheerful and contented, and free from the disabilities,

both hereditary and acquired, which handicap the unfortunate Maya Indian.

Beautiful little yellow and brown lizards became very common and tame about the hut. They would jump on to my leg if they saw an ant or fly making his way down my trousers, and must have accounted for thousands of insects. Hedges's hut was swarming with ants, but it was quite exceptional to see one in mine, where the lizards range freely. No distance seems to be too far a jump for them, and it was rather startling when one alighted on one's shoulders from the rafters, ten feet overhead, in a flying leap in pursuit of an insect.

For two nights both Muddy and I heard some good-sized animal wandering around our huts, and even sniffing at the doors, which we always keep securely tied, though the precaution is rather a useless one, for the stick walls, lined with palm-leaf, form a frail barrier indeed, through which a good-sized dog could easily burst, but the closed door gives one a comfortable sense of security, even if it is not justified. Muddy thought this animal might be a peccari, but I considered it more likely to be an ordinary Indian pig, broken out from its sty in the village. In the morning, however, the mystery was solved, as it rained rather heavily during the night, and in the soft mud covering our terrace, were plainly discernible the tracks of a good-sized jaguar, accompanied by those of a very tiny one—evidently mother and child, prowling around to see what they could pick up. The jaguar does not usually hang around a human habitation like this, but owing to the number of pigs kept by the Indians, and the inefficient way that they protect them in little stick stockades a few feet high which can be easily jumped by a tiger, these animals have become very plentiful and extremely bold around Columbia. They have never,

so far, attacked a human being, and as long as the supply of pigs lasts are not likely to do so, but I decided to sleep in future with a loaded gun by my bedside.

Mitchell Hedges' temperature reached 105 degrees, and he was delirious most of the time ; he evidently had got a double infection of the common tertian malaria, as for some days previous to this he had been getting a high temperature at night—on two occasions up to 105 degrees—which went down to normal every morning. The only thing to do was to shove thirty grains of quinine into him daily.

Our labourers finally all deserted us, so we were compelled to make a start. One dug-out went ahead with our heavy stuff, and we succeeded in getting crews together (though very scratch ones) for three more. Mitchell Hedges had to be assisted down the steep river bank, with Robby, who had arrived the previous day, on one side and myself on the other—only a fair return for his assisting me to the hammock in which I reached Lubaantun—and at 7 a.m. we bade *au revoir* to the ruins where he had spent so many strenuous weeks, and undergone so many hardships ; where we had all been sick, and two at least of us had for a time been in doubt whether we should ever leave them alive. Yet our stay had been intensely interesting, some new discovery or fresh piece of information turning up daily ; and I do not think that there was one of us who did not, at the bottom of his heart, feel a certain sense of regret that our labours were for the time being over, though rejoicing exceedingly at a return to the fleshpots of Egypt, as represented by comfortable beds, good water, eatable food, and freedom from the eternal insect pest, which acts as a constant irritant to tired nerves and poorly fed bodies.

Before leaving we christened the two little creeks which bound the citadel on each side, Chikinha and Likinha,

Maya for East and West Water. My dug-out led at first, paddled by the *Alcalde* and his young brother, but soon the larger boat, containing Lady Brown and Mitchell Hedges, passed me, paddling at a great rate. I found later that the paddlers had been promised a substantial premium if they would overtake and pass me, as a very disgusting odour pervaded the larger boat from the time it left Lubaantun, and they thought it must be due to the mud stirred up from the bottom of the river, which was very low, by the keel of my boat when passing shallow places, so they determined to do a little mud stirring on their own account for my benefit. That this was not the cause of the smell, however, was proved by the fact that, so far from proving less after passing me, it got far worse as the sun rose and the day got hotter, so much so that, later in the evening, on reaching the *Cara*, which was anchored at the mouth of the creek, both Lady Brown and Mitchell Hedges were suffering from bad headaches and complete loss of appetite. As my boat came up to the *Cara* a horrible whiff of putrescence almost knocked me over, and, on searching Mitchell Hedges' dug-out, the mystery was soon solved by the discovery of kerosene tins full of semi-putrescent pork. It seemed that a wretched youth named Gallego, who had been acting as a sort of factotum for Mitchell Hedges, had conceived the idea of buying pigs cheaply from the Indians, salting them, and taking them to Belize to sell as salt pork, at a profit of 150 per cent. With this object in view, he had bought two large pigs, and, partly reducing them to lard and partly salting the meat, had endeavoured to effect a further economy by putting them in Mitchell Hedges' dorey, and thus obtain free freight to Belize. Unfortunately for all concerned, the corning had been very imperfectly accomplished, and the longer the tins were exposed to the

sun the worse they got, till at last the smell was quite apparent a quarter of a mile away, and the only wonder was how Mitchell Hedges and Lady Brown managed to stand it as long as they did. Gallego said the corned pork, like the curate's egg, was perfectly good in places; and, certainly, after the more odoriferous parts had been thrown overboard, it did not smell so vilely. He was, nevertheless, sent off at once with the balance to Punta Gorda, in the small dorey, while we spent the night on board the *Cara*, leaving next morning at 6 a.m. for Punta Gorda, where we arrived about 9 a.m., and, after a short stay to lay in provisions, set out about midday for Water Cay, where we arrived before dark.

That night the sky was extraordinarily overcast, and about 8 p.m. quite a strong wind was blowing, so much so that, though she was moored on the lee side of the bay in smooth water, Mitchell Hedges had an extra anchor out on the *Cara*, a precaution which Robby, her engineer, ridiculed as over-cautious. About 10 p.m. we retired, Robby and myself sleeping on the *Cara*, and Mitchell Hedges ashore. The wind kept increasing in force, till about midnight it was blowing a young hurricane; the rumble of thunder was never absent from the air, and the whole sky was lit up, as I have never seen it before, by one continuous blaze of sheet lightning, and looking off the deck of the *Cara* the bay was surrounded by angry, grey sea, backed by the milk-white line of the reef, over which great breakers were bellowing and tumbling, making a noise which, added to the roar of the tempest and the swish of the coconut-trees, rendered talking impossible. The whole scene was extraordinarily impressive and one not often witnessed, even in the tropics. One's ears were filled with the terrific racket of the wind, the breakers, and the thunder,

while one's eyes were dazzled by the constant, sickly, metallic glare of the sheet lightning, punctuated at frequent intervals by jagged, ugly streaks of the more malignant chain lightning zigzagging athwart the sky. I felt uncommonly glad Mitchell Hedges had had the inspiration to get the second anchor out, and, as the *Cara* seemed to be lying snug under the lee of the cay, I retired to my bunk and went to sleep. I was awakened suddenly by a most terrific crash and a dash of rain in my face, and jumped up thinking the *Cara* must have broken adrift, struck on the reef, and been wrecked. What had actually happened was that the forward deck-house had been struck by lightning, which had fused part of the metal framework, as well as the wire stays of the mast. The wind, which was now blowing a perfect hurricane, had carried away the deck-house like a feather, somewhere into the Caribbean, while the mast had come down with a crash on the canvas roof of the after-house, where I was peacefully sleeping, and fallen within a foot of my head, splitting the roof and allowing the rain, which was pouring down in torrents, to blow in on me. There was nothing to be done till the morning, as the dinghy could not live in the sea then running, even for the short distance to the shore ; so I retired to the cabin, but here things were very far from comfortable, as the deck-planks had been sprung by the collapse of the mast, and water was pouring in everywhere. The swish of the torrential rain was now added to the roar of the thunder and the boom of the reef. Robby got the engine going, as he feared even the two anchors would not hold her, and we spent an extremely anxious and uncomfortable three hours till daybreak, the lightning having struck her about 3 a.m. Fortunately, however, the weather had moderated somewhat, and, in the sickly light of a drizzling

dawn, we were able to estimate the amount of damage which had been done.

Mitchell Hedges ashore had not fared much better than myself, for the rain had beaten in through the corrugated-iron roof which the carpenters had been repairing the previous day, and he was so anxious over the fate of the *Cara* that he got no sleep at all, but came out every few minutes to see whether she was still afloat, as, in the constant flare of lightning, she was as plainly visible as if it had been midday. He told me that, till she was struck, the lightning actually seemed to play and flicker about the mast and the forward deck-house very much like St. Elmo lights.

Next day, notwithstanding the disreputable appearance of the *Cara*, we managed to make Belize in safety, where we all enjoyed the first square meal for many months.

The results of our season's work had been highly satisfactory. In the citadel and the amphitheatre we discovered structures of a type hitherto unknown in the Maya area. The occupation of the site at three different periods, as indicated by the burial mounds, the pyramids, and the subterranean walls, and the great diversity in type of the figurines encountered, dating as they do, apparently, from the Old Empire to the Spanish Conquest, lead to the hope that this site will yield valuable stratigraphic evidence upon which may be based stylistic dating applicable to the whole Maya area. We look forward eagerly to the work of the next field season, beginning in February, 1926, when it is hoped that at least some of the many problems encountered during the past season may be solved, and a step forward made in our knowledge of the great aboriginal Maya civilisation.

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